

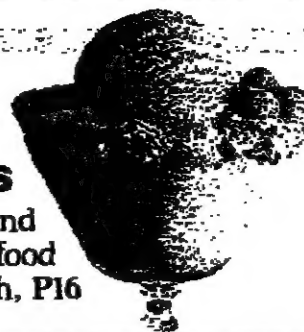
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Venables quits to pursue legal battle with Sugar



Venables: legal problems

By JOHN GOODBODY
SPORTS NEWS
CORRESPONDENT

TERRY VENABLES is to stand down as England football coach after the European championships this summer to concentrate on a series of court cases arising from his long-running dispute with Alan Sugar and allegations about his business dealings.

In an announcement yesterday, the Football Association said that Venables had decided not to 'lead England's attempt to qualify for the 1998 World Cup because he feared that a "number of time-consuming legal battles" would interfere with his work.

Venables made up his mind last month, but the announcement was delayed as the FA asked him to reconsider over Christmas. The association will now set about finding a successor, with Kevin Keegan the front-runner.

Venables's decision to go at the end of his two-and-a-half-year contract comes after a stream of media stories about his past financial activities, and he is known to believe that there has been an orchestrated campaign to discredit him since his departure from Tottenham in 1993. The FA said yesterday that he was determined to clear his name.

His wrongful dismissal case against Tottenham and its chairman, Mr Sugar, is likely to be heard in autumn and he also has three libel actions outstanding: one against Panorama, one against the Daily Mirror, and one in which he is being sued by Mr Sugar.

Venables said yesterday that he was going because the cases could be "problematic". "We would have a World Cup qualifying game around October or November and I could be in court for several weeks. I think it's a bit of an embarrassment to the FA, but in the circumstances I have made the decision and it gives them time to get somebody else."

He ruled out a change of heart even if England, as host country, won the European Championships in June. And asked if he might return at some time in the future, he replied: "I haven't thought that far ahead."

Israelis hail King Husain's peace trip

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN TEL AVIV

KING HUSAIN of Jordan yesterday became the first Arab monarch to visit Tel Aviv, winning the hearts and minds of its 400,000 people by declaring himself "among friends" and boosting the chances of peace in the Middle East.

In the most dramatic personal gesture since President Sadat of Egypt arrived in Jerusalem to engineer the beginning of the end of old hostilities nearly 20 years ago, the Jordanian leader defied the enemies of peace from both the Jewish and Islamic extremes.

Straight-backed, he showed not a flicker of fear although it took a quarter of the whole Israeli police force to protect him in an operation which all but shut down this most Jewish of cities.

"We love him. We admire him more than any other Arab leader," said Perry Meraz, 50, an import agent who stood for more than four hours to catch a glimpse of the royal motorcade sweeping by. "We will never forget that it was his grandfather [King Abdullah] who was the first Arab leader to die in the cause of bringing Jews and Arabs together."

The centrepiece of the trip was the opening of a trauma surgical unit at the hospital where Yitzhak Rabin died nine weeks ago. In a moving ceremony, the Jordanian monarch he had left by his eloquent address at Rabin's funeral. With a sincerity of tone that affected even Jewish cynics among the 700-strong audience at the Ichilov hospital, he described Rabin as "my sister" and said: "To be very frank, I feel at home here and among friends."

He was standing under a huge portrait of Rabin surrounded by thousands of red-and-white carnations and near to television monitors which only minutes before had shown a film of past Israeli and Jordanian wars.

The obvious failure of Rabin's right-wing Jewish assassin to halt the peace process on November 4 was demonstrated by the presence in the hospital of two Jordanian military officers undergoing treatment there.

Until the soldiers were shown on television, many ordinary Israelis could scarcely believe that Jordanian military personnel were now openly coming to Tel Aviv for treatment. One was the victim of a helicopter accident and the other was wounded while serving in Bosnia.

"We are all the sons of Abraham," the king said before helping to unveil a memorial wall to Rabin less than half a mile from the spot where he was shot.

The king, who defied criticism from Arabs at home to make his first official visit to Israel, infuriated the Palestine Liberation Organisation by visiting the largest Jewish city before travelling once to any of the areas they have "liberated" from Israeli occupation. "It is wrong of King Husain to visit Israel," said Jibril al-Rajoub, head of PLO security in the West Bank.

It fell to Gabi Barbash, director general of the hospital to answer the question being asked by every Tel Avivian I interviewed. "Until today, we have not been able to figure out why the Israeli people have so much affection for you despite wars, casualties and animosity that lasted for years," he told the Sandhurst-educated monarch.

"Your tears during the funeral, your majesty, melted our hearts." These were the tears of a friend. The peace is not just a piece of paper. Peace is people, daily life and an outstretched hand."

Shimon Peres, the Israeli Prime Minister, told the king: "I do not know any other element that can unite us more than your visit to our country."

Photograph, page 22



Claude Banks kisses his wife, Daphne, at their press conference in Hittingbrook Hospital yesterday

I am feeling fine, says woman who was pronounced dead

BY TIM JONES AND JOANNA BALE

THE woman who came back from the dead said yesterday that she felt fine as the doctor who declared her dead apologised.

Daphne Banks, who is still recovering in hospital, looked pale but was able to walk unaided as she appeared with her husband, Claude, at a news conference. She refused to comment on her experience and would only say: "I'm fine, thank you."

Her solicitor, Anthony Northey, said that Mrs Banks, 61, had attempted suicide with an overdose at her home in Stonely, near Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, on New Year's Eve. David Roberts, a GP who is based in the nearby village of Great Staughton, wrongly declared her dead.

Mr Northey said: "Daphne

and Claude Banks have had the opportunity of reflecting carefully over the recent traumatic events and the various options open to them. They have decided against making any formal complaint to the Family Health Services Authority or the General Medical Council or the Health Service Ombudsman. They have also decided that they do not intend to institute legal proceedings. Obviously the doctor in question made an error of judgment, but luckily the error has not had fatal consequences."

He added: "The family are just extremely grateful and relieved that Daphne is alive and making very good progress. Daphne unfortunately suffers from epilepsy. As a result, she was not able to drive. Because of her increas-

ing years she was no longer able to walk into the village of Kimbolton, some distance from her home. She felt very lonely and isolated and started to suffer from depression."

"On New Year's Eve it came to a head. She could not face going on. She took a large quantity of her epilepsy tablets and also some sleeping tablets. She climbed into bed and just drifted off to sleep."

Mr Northey said Mr Banks had found his wife in the early hours of New Year's Day. He had called the ambulance service who arranged for a GP to attend the home. Dr Roberts examined Mrs Banks and told Mr Banks that she was dead. The doctor then called an undertaker.

Ken Davison, a family friend, spotted a varicose vein

twisting, then heard her snore, soon after she was delivered to the mortuary of Hittingbrook Hospital at about 4.30am. An emergency resuscitation team was called and she was taken to an intensive care ward. After three days in intensive care Mrs Banks was transferred to a general ward where she took a get-well call from John Major, their local MP.

Mr Northey revealed that Mrs Banks had little recollection of the next five days. He said: "Her next recollection was of her daughter leaning over her for a few brief seconds. She promptly went back to sleep but then drifted in and out of consciousness for Continued on page 2, col 5

Body and Mind, page 16

Balloonist lands after SOS over Atlantic

FROM QUENTIN LETTS
IN NEW YORK

AN AMERICAN balloonist's attempt to circumnavigate the globe came to grief off Canada yesterday. Steve Fossett, 51, a Chicago banker, managed to land his one-man balloon, Solo Challenger, on a field in New Brunswick hours after it seemed he would ditch in the potentially deadly waters of the North Atlantic.

Mr Fossett jettisoned belongings to reduce weight as he fought to keep the balloon above the waves after burner problems developed. He activated his emergency beacon at 7.10am in poor conditions — snow, wind and cloud cover at 2,000 ft — but with visibility down to a mile, rescuers spent the morning trying to locate his balloon.

Two helicopters, a Hercules aeroplane and a coastguard cutter were sent to the Bay of Fundy to seek the stricken balloon. Discarded items from the balloon were found in the water, initially creating unease among rescuers, but setting a trail to the field where it had landed.

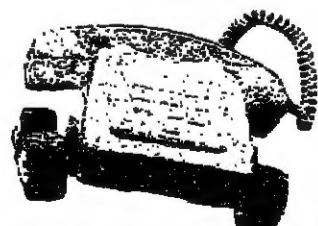
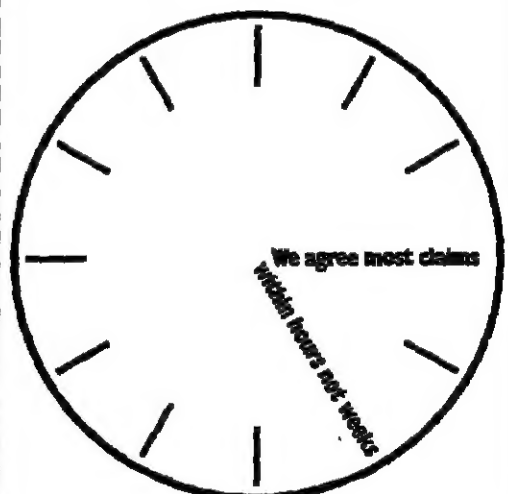
Richard Branson's balloon, Global Challenger, will take off from Marrakesh, Morocco, at the weekend — and so will a Dutch balloon, Unicef Flyer, from The Netherlands.

THE MOTHER, THE WIFE, THE MONARCH

FROM QUENTIN LETTS
IN NEW YORK



On Saturday in The Times, the first part of our serialisation of Elizabeth, an intimate portrait by the acclaimed biographer of George VI. Tomorrow, Valerie Grove meets Sarah Bradford, who drew upon previously unpublished diaries, memoirs and interviews to write her authoritative biography of a wife, mother and monarch in her seventh year. ONLY IN THE TIMES ON SATURDAY AND ALL NEXT WEEK



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Body and Mind, page 16

No pit, no torment: damnation is not as cruel as it is painted, says Anglican report

Church blocks the old road to fiery Hell with good intentions

By RUTH GLEDHILL
RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

TRADITIONAL images of hellfire and damnation are wrong, says a Church of England report which criticises some past teachings for trying to frighten people too much.

"Sadistically expressed" views of eternal torment and punishment left "scarring psychological scars on many", it says today. "Christians have professed appalling theologies which made God into a sadistic monster."

Hell should not be seen as eternal torment, but as nothingness, say the senior clergy who drew up the report *The Mystery of Salvation*, by the Church's doctrine commission. They say Hell is the final and irrevocable "choosing of that which is opposed to God so completely and so absolutely that the only end is total non-being."

The report warns that Christians cannot afford to ignore the realities of damnation and final judgment. The Church had to communicate its belief in a "saving God... in a society where there is no agreement about the peril in which we stand, and in which religious language has no natural and agreed reference point."

People have to be saved from sin and death, but society's missing sense of ultimate accountability "has meant losing the shape and meaning" of life. "What is clear, as the century moves to its close, is that for many people in our culture there are not only no more divine certainties, but no 'divine'."

Folk religion proved there was a continuing quest for God, but the form of worship had become a matter of personal choice. In defining the sins people need saving from, the report argues that the Church must take account of changes in society caused by feminism.

"All the major branches of theology evolved in a context in which the dominant role of men passed for the most part unquestioned and indeed unnoted," the report says.

While the core of sin is often represented as "overweening



Dr David Jenkins, top left: political hell is fascism; Dante, top right: heard sighs and loud wailings; Sartre, above left: simply, Hell is other people; Lord St John: selfishness — or a missed train

pride, if women had played a greater part in developing the concept of sin, they might have placed more emphasis on the failure to assert and take responsibility for oneself.

The former Bishop of St Albans, the Right Rev John Taylor, said that to tell people they were in peril would mean little when they were seeking self-fulfilment and satisfaction, when they "are having a very good time and their 'Lottery' number might come up on Saturday evening — undoubtedly people are in considerable peril, but they are not aware of this."

Different cultures had different evils from which people desired salvation, he said.

People of the New Testament era lived in "a demonic world from which salvation was sought." Slaves in America 200 years ago might have been told to bear their suffering in this life because there were clouds of glory to come. But today, many people were not concerned about the after-life. He said: "Today there is a variety of things from which people need to be saved. Salvation is more thought of, rightly or wrongly, in terms of problems within this life rather than the life to come."

Asked whether people of other faiths could be saved, Bishop Taylor said: "That is in God's hands."

the Right Rev Alec Graham, agreed. "In everybody's life there is evidence of some degree of virtue. But as to what is final and ultimate, matters rest in God's hands. We are quite clear that if and when we all wake up hereafter and we find that we have been saved, this will be solely by the grace of God," he said.

The report is certain to prompt discussion of how people see Hell.

Dr David Jenkins, the former Bishop of Durham, said: "I am afraid of contributing to Hell now and I would like to think God can save everyone from Hell. I don't think we can dodge our responsibilities but I don't believe He would keep us eternally in Hell."

Hell on earth was "what we produce when we follow our own interests and feelings without regard to anyone else — politically, it is fascism."

Lord St John of Fawley, former Leader of the House of Commons and Master of Emmanuel College Cambridge, said Hell on earth was standing in a rainstorm on the platform of an isolated railway station at 12.01 in the morning, knowing that the last train left at midnight. More seriously, it was "that state of total selfishness, excluding all love of God and other human beings."

Malcolm Bradbury, author and literary critic, said Hell was a literary party at the Groucho club in London, being forced to listen to authors talking about money and their agents.

This view echoed perhaps the pithiest definition, by Jean-Paul Sartre, the French existentialist, who said: "Hell is other people."

Dante Alighieri, the medieval Italian poet, gave the traditional view in his poem *The Divine Comedy*. "There sighs, lamentations and loud wailings resounded through the starless air, so that at first it made me weep; strange tongues, horrible language; words of pain, tones of anger, voices loud and hoarse and with these the sound of hands, made a tumult which was whirling through that air forever dark, and sand eddies in a whirlwind."

Using the *pesher* technique, a way of uncovering different layers of meaning in the text, Dr Thiering says



Apocalypse then: traditional, 15th century portrayal of the fiery pit, in the school of Hieronymus Bosch

Academic's new revelations dismiss 666 as a wrong number

THE BIBLE'S Book of Revelation, inspiration for images of the final judgment and for horror films such as *The Omen*, is not about the end of the world at all, according to new research published today.

It is an historical account of the Christian movement in the first century, says Barbara Thiering, an Australian academic who has analysed mythic themes such as Armageddon, the Beast whose number is 666, and the Great Harlot clothed in purple and scarlet.

Using the *pesher* technique, a way of uncovering different layers of meaning in the text, Dr Thiering says

Revelation is not a vision of the future but an accurate, detailed account of events in the early church up until AD114.

Dr Thiering, whose book *Jesus the Man* challenged traditional Christian beliefs in events such as the virgin birth, says that Jesus did not die on the cross but remained in deep seclusion for 40 years after the crucifixion, partly for political reasons and partly because he was observing the celibate rule of his community of ascetics.

During these years he continued to lead his party of new Christians, directing their movements until they reached Rome, she says. In

an era when the Christians were seen as the heretics, the beast "rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on its horns ten diadems" was the anti-Pope. Simon Magus, she says.

Jezebel was mistress of Magus, the character who in western tradition became Dr Faust who sold his soul to the devil, and could be accused literally of harlotry, she says.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse were priests who visited villages, riding on horses because of their high status, and bearing banners in an appropriate colour for the season, she argues.

The lion, calf, man and eagle were the four evange-

lists who wrote the four Gospels.

Although she is unusual in using a skilled method of biblical analysis to draw out her conclusions, Dr Thiering is likely to be one of many who offer new interpretations to Revelation as the millennium approaches.

Her research was dismissed by the Rev Jonathan Jennings, spokesman for the Church of England, who said: "This sounds distinctly far-fetched."

"This certainly does not fit with the Church's understanding of the Book of Revelation, which believes it to be the mystical vision of St John the Divine."

British cinemas celebrate birthday with best weekend

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

BRITISH cinemas are celebrating the highest grossing weekend in box-office history. They took more than £7.24 million last Friday, Saturday and Sunday, an exhilarating start to the year in which British cinema celebrates its centenary.

It beat the £6.65 million taken in July 1993 on the weekend that *Jurassic Park* opened nationwide. However, the latest success has come from a combination of films catering for a variety of tastes, rather than one runaway success. The highly acclaimed thriller *Seven*, with Brad Pitt, and *Something to Talk About*, starring Julia Roberts, were the main attractions.

Dave Thurston, director of operations for Entertainment Data International (EDI), said there was such a cross-section of films that "everyone went to the cinema": the choice also included the latest James Bond, *Goldeneye*; Jim Carrey's *Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls*; and *Babe*, which uses special effects to depict a

talking pig that believes it is a sheepdog.

John Wilkinson, chief executive of the Cinema Exhibitors' Association, which represents 90 per cent of cinema screens, said: "Most people are usually a bit broke after Christmas and with the rollover of the lottery, people were spending more than usual on that. So it is rather fantastic that in the weekend when all these calls upon the purse were happening, we hit the highest figure ever."

Nigel Green, joint managing director of Entertainment Film Distributors, which distributed *Seven*, said that the film had taken nearly £2.7 million: "It is one of the biggest openings in Britain — the biggest ever for an independently released film, as opposed to a Hollywood studio. Films are acquired at script-stage, and we knew we had a good script. When we saw the film, we knew it would do well. It's part of this renewed interest in cinema. We're very pleased about the

result." British cinema-going figures compare well in percentage terms with those in America, Mr Thurston said. "Of course, they've got a lot more people than we have. They also never got out of the cinema habit. We had a slump in the 1970s, despite big hit films. People have been saying cinema's been dying since 1948. I'm not convinced."

The industry has been further bolstered by the growth since 1985 of multiplex cinemas: many of them are out of town, which has encouraged higher attendances in the provinces. Britain boasts 70 multiplex cinemas, with about 650 screens and more than 130,000 seats. Warners is opening two multiplexes, in Watford and Croydon, on January 17. All the major companies are looking for sites on which to build more.

Mr Wilkinson said that cinema is enjoying such a boom that about 100 screens are expected to be built this year, compared with about 55 last year.

Burns discovery divides academics

By GILLIAN BOWDITCH, SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

A YOUNG Scots academic claims to have found 40 new poems by Robert Burns. News of the discovery, which coincides with a three-day conference on Scotland's national poet at Strathclyde University in Glasgow, comes in the bicentenary year of Burns's death.

The poems, without their author's name, were spotted by Patrick Hogg, 35, a writer working on a book entitled *The Patriot Bard*, in two newspapers of the 1790s. His claims have divided the Scottish academic community.

The *Edinburgh Gazette* and the London paper the *Morning Chronicle* were both radical newspapers to which Burns was known to have contributed and with whose editors he corresponded.

Mr Hogg's theory is that as an excise-man Burns would have to have been very careful about what he wrote. The poems, many of which are believed to be political in tone, are also more anguished than much of Burns's work. Mr

Hogg said they "just seemed to jump out of the page" at him. Having read the collected works of Burns many times, the poems seemed to him to be a natural fit. One was entitled *Arms* which Mr Hogg translated as "from the ploughman", Burns's occupation in his early years.

Dr Kenneth Simpson, director of the Centre of Scottish Cultural Studies at Strathclyde University and the organiser of the Burns conference that starts today, said authorship would be extremely difficult to prove.

Dr James Mackay, a Burns biographer, has seen a few of the poems and believes they are not by Burns. "There is a style to his work that is difficult to define, but if you have been studying it for a lifetime, you can spot a Burns poem a mile away. These are definitely inferior in every respect."

The poems will form part of a BBC Omnibus documentary, *Ploughboy of the Western World*, to be broadcast on January 22.

Woman golfer 'froze' after felling man with punch

By JOANNA BALE

A WOMAN golfer described yesterday how she "froze" after knocking a businessman from his bar stool with a right hook when he allegedly harassed her thigh.

Philomena Vaughan, 42, who struck fellow club member John Price in a crowded bar during an awards evening, told an industrial tribunal: "He fell off the stool and I said 'I have told you, take your hand away from me'."

Mrs Vaughan, who was three times club champion at Dewstow Golf Club, Gwent, is claiming she was later sacked unfairly from her job as the golf shop manageress. The tribunal in Cardiff was told the 5ft 6in mother of four was nicknamed "Muhammad Ali" and "Rocky" after the incident.

Mrs Vaughan, who said she had drunk a single gin and lemonade, walked past Mr Price, 49, and said she left his hand go under her waistcoat to her thigh. She told the tribunal: "I said 'Take your



Vaughan said Mr Price harassed her thigh at bar

hand away from me" and pushed his hand. When he moved his hand towards me I said 'I have told you, take your hand away from me'."

Mrs Vaughan claimed Mr Price was smiling and laughing. As she walked away, he made a remark and she asked what he had said. She added: "He cupped his hand and flicked it across my face, touching the tip of my nose. As

he did that I put my left hand up and then hit him with my right hand on the side of his face."

Mrs Vaughan, of Rogiet, near Newport, said she went to find her husband Peter, a company sales manager, who was also attending the event as a prize winner. Mrs Vaughan, who said she was "shaking like hell", told her husband: "John Price touched me up and I have hit him. He's on the floor." After calming her down and asking the men's captain to look after her, Mr Vaughan approached Mr Price at the bar and told him to "sort himself out".

Mrs Vaughan, who stood up at the hearing to demonstrate the alleged assault, said she was suspended from playing golf two months later by Elwyn Harris, the club committee chairman, after she refused to sign a paper stating there had been no assault. She also rejected his request to apologise to Mr Price "because he was a businessman and I was a woman". The tribunal was adjourned until March.

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'An accident waiting to happen'

RAF crews escape as 'dogfighting' Tornados collide

By PAUL WILKINSON AND MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

FOUR crewmen ejected to safety yesterday when two RAF jet fighters collided while apparently engaged in mock combat at about 800ft. Eyewitnesses said the Tornado F3 air defence aircraft touched wings as one was completing a circular manoeuvre over open ground about nine miles from RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire.

One of the Tornados, from 56 Squadron and valued at about £17 million each, crashed 400 yards from the farm of Bill Drury at Rowston. "One plane was doing a big circle and as it came out of the circle it started flying north," he said. "Another plane com-

ing from the north collided with it right above my house. They touched wings and then dropped out of the sky."

One of the pilots is a student flyer although "very experienced", according to Group Captain Mal Gleave, station commander at RAF Coningsby, a training base to convert aircrew to Tornado F3s. He added: "All student aircrew who come here have been through all stages of training or they are returning to these aircraft after different duties."

The four RAF crewmen were taken to Lincoln County Hospital by two search and rescue helicopters. An RAF

spokesman described their condition as "walking wounded". Group Captain Gleave said one of them might be transferred to hospital in Nottingham as a precaution.

"I'm very relieved that they managed to eject safely. They weren't operating at low altitude so they had a longer time available after they ejected." A board of inquiry was launched immediately into the collision, which brings to eight the number of Tornado F3s lost in incidents since 1985. Group Captain Gleave declined to speculate on the reasons for the collision but confirmed that the two Tornados were flying in close formation.

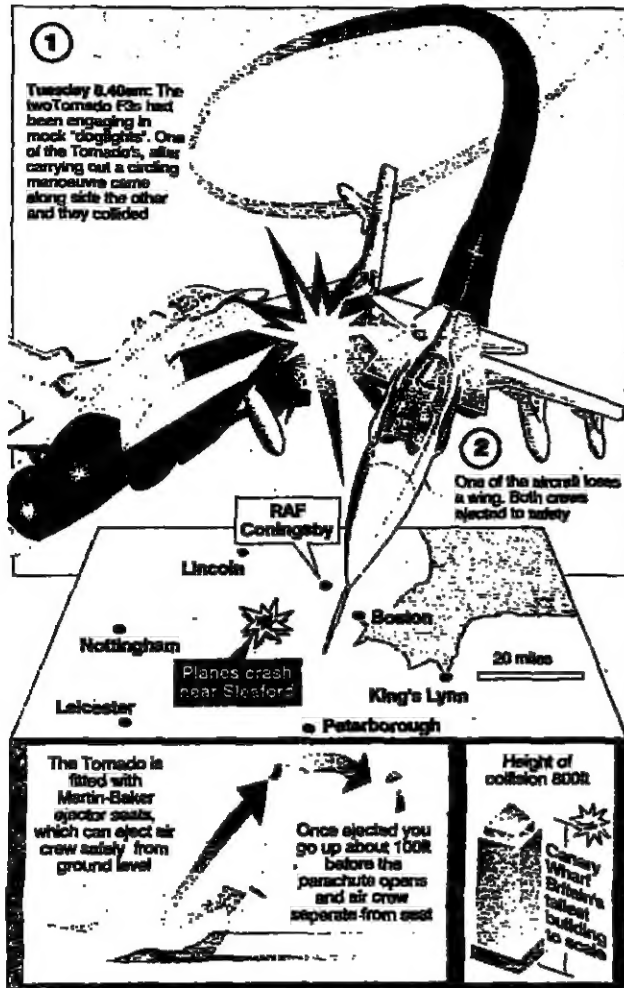
The crash happened at 8.40am, nine miles west of Coningsby. Stewart Rhodes, another eyewitness, saw it as he was working on the roof of his shed in the nearby village of Ewerby.

"I saw the aircraft dogfighting at about 700 to 800 feet," he said. "They were travelling at a fairly high speed. We are used to seeing Tornados dogfighting at low level, but in this case they were fairly high. Suddenly I saw a flash, I thought it was a flare, then I realised they had collided."

"One of the planes started to spiral, he had lost his right wing. The plane hit the ground, it was a fireball and there was a huge crater."

The collision brought complaints from locals that it had been "an accident waiting to happen". Tracy Macham, 30, who lives a few hundred yards from where one of the planes crashed into a field, said: "We often see the planes flying really low and you can't help but think they might hit the village one day."

Group Captain Gleave said: "The feelings of the local community are something we bear in mind at all times and we understand people's fears, but these kind of incidents are very uncommon. The aircraft were not training over residential areas."



The actor's children Alexandra and Matthew launching Push 2000 yesterday with their mother Gae Exton

Superman's son thanks Gemma

By A STAFF REPORTER

AN 11-year-old disabled girl who wrote to Christopher Reeve, urging him not to give up hope after the riding accident that left him paralysed from the neck down, received his thanks yesterday.

The message from the screen Superman was passed on to Gemma Quinn, who has been in a wheelchair since a road crash in 1992, by the actor's 16-year-old son Matthew.

Gemma, from Liverpool, wrote to the actor after his accident at an equestrian event in America last year. Her meeting with his son took place in London at the launch of Push 2000 to raise money for spinal injury research. The International Spinal Research Trust hopes to raise £500,000.

Gemma's father Michael said: "Matthew came over to her and said his dad had asked him to personally thank Gemma for her letter. She has kept in touch with him and recently sent him a fax inviting him over to Liverpool, but we haven't heard anything yet."

Reeve, who is patron of the event, said in a message

delivered at the launch by his son: "Since my accident, I have talked to a lot of people about the prospects for finding a cure for paralysis. The fact is we are on the threshold of a new era in medical science. Treatments for this condition are right around the corner. Thousands who are still stuck in these chairs will get up and walk."

"This is a worldwide problem which afflicts several million people, but it is one which international science is quite confident it can solve."

Afterwards Matthew, who was joined by his sister Alexandra, 12, and their mother Gae Exton, spoke of the slow recovery of his father, who hopes to walk again within ten years. "He is going great now he is out of the hospital and at home. He is hoping to come over to England as soon as he can."

"But it all depends on how he is doing. His improvement is unreal. I can see the difference just between visits. He can come off the respirator for one hour and ten minutes a day when he breathes by himself. He is fighting all the way." Alexan-



Gemma: she wrote to the paralysed Reeve

dra, who like her brother attends school in London, said: "To be up and walking is his ambition."

Push 2000 will take place between May 14 and July 10. Three paralysed people in wheelchairs will aim to com-

plete the 1,200-mile trip from Land's End to John O'Groats, during which they will visit 12 spinal injury units.

Ian Walder, director of the event, said: "There is a real and growing enthusiasm which now exists across society to end the permanence of paralysis caused by spinal cord injury. Research funded by the trust has demonstrated that damaged spinal cord nerve fibres can be persuaded to regenerate and restore function and sensitivity."

"We are some way from developing treatments which are ready for clinical trials but we are making most encouraging progress."

Simon Barnes, promotion manager for Push 2000 and one of those taking part, broke his back on an assault course in 1984 and organised a similar event - The Great British Push - ten years ago.

He said: "You may wonder why three guys with broken backs would want to take on this epic slog. But if you consider the slog that faces paralysed people every day of their lives it will help you realise that pushing 1,200 miles over 62 days in a wheelchair isn't really all that challenging."

Coventry air crash prompts new rules

By HARVEY ELLIOTT
AIR CORRESPONDENT

TIGHTER controls on foreign aircraft are likely after an investigation into the crash of an Algerian cargo jet, in which five people died.

The crew of the Boeing 737, which had been chartered to carry cattle, was tired after ten hours on duty and could not fully understand instructions in English. The aircraft was not equipped to receive automatic landing guidance, the crew did not carry out proper pre-landing checks and a permit to operate the charter had not been obtained from the Transport Department, the Air Accident Investigation Branch says.

The three Algerian crew and two British animal handlers died after the plane hit an electricity pylon and crashed into woods, narrowly missing a housing estate, as it came into land at Coventry airport in December 1994.

The Transport Department said yesterday that it is to consult British airlines about tighter rules on the use of foreign jets for charter flights.

The Civil Aviation Authority is to make more frequent safety checks on foreign planes and to take part in international checks on countries with poor aviation records.

CORRECTIONS

Mr Harold A Whelehan

On December 19 1994 we reported on the crisis in the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. That article contained references to Mr Harold Whelehan, the former Irish Attorney-General, which suggested that he had deliberately disregarded his duties as Attorney-General over the extradition of a paedophile priest to Northern Ireland. We now accept that this suggestion was unwarranted and apologise to Mr Whelehan for any hurt and embarrassment caused. We have agreed to pay a sum to a charity of Mr Whelehan's choice.

□ The vice-chairman of the BBC board of governors (report, yesterday) is Lord Cocks, and not Mr David Scholey.

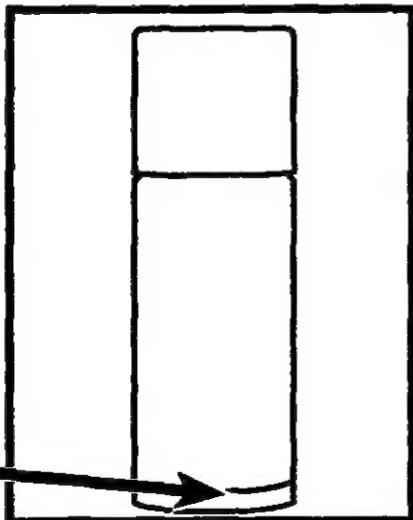
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'Two-nil, two-nil,' chant campaigners as they outwit massed ranks of security guards

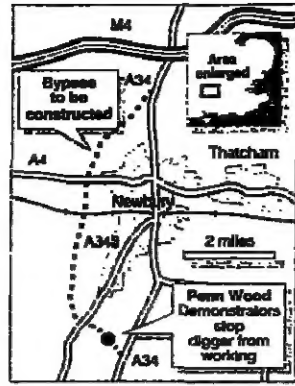
Newbury protesters win again as police halt work on bypass

By ADRIAN LEE

WORK on the Newbury bypass was abandoned yesterday when protesters overcame security guards, throwing themselves under a digger and tearing equipment from contractors' hands. With two days of the £100 million project gone, little more than an hour's work has been completed, with about 50 small trees cleared from the southern tip of the bypass route.

The protests mean taxpayers are footing a bill of at least £20,000 a day for the security operation alone. The 14-week contract for clearance work includes a figure of £500,000 to employ between 300 and 400 private guards. Policing is costing £5,000 a day.

The aborted start was condemned by David Rendel, the Liberal Democrat MP for Newbury, who said it was extraordinary that demonstrators had again won the day. The 150 guards had marched onto the site, at Great Penn Wood, Hampshire, flanking a mechanical digger. About a dozen protesters in a small camp were brushed aside and hedges and trees were flattened as work appeared to



begin in earnest just before 9am. But the highly organised protesters, using mobile telephones and CB radios to summon reinforcements, surged forward to surround the digger and forced it to stop operating as the guards fought to drive them back, linking arms in a tight circle.

Two protesters managed to get beneath the machine's claws, while others huddled in holes where trees had been uprooted. During the struggle one protester and one security guard suffered leg injuries.

Inspector Frank Connor of Hampshire Constabulary said: "It is not a police job to

move these people out, it is a matter for the security guards. The main thing is that nobody gets injured." Mr Connor's announcement that work had finished for the day was greeted by cheers and chants of "two-nil, two-nil".

Susan Millington, a protest co-ordinator of Newbury Friends of the Earth, said: "Whatever they throw at us we obviously have the intelligence and imagination to outwit them peacefully." Despite yesterday's minor injuries, the conflict was largely good-natured and limited to pushing and shoving.

The Highways Agency said the contractor, which it will not name, could ask for more money if the size of protest was larger than anticipated. It is thought the guards are being paid about £50 a day, including food and accommodation, bringing the daily cost to at least £15,000 at present. Coach and mini-bus hire adds another £750 a day to transport the guards to work sites.

Earlier yesterday campaigners attacked the base of the bus company which takes guards from their living quarters, 14 miles outside Newbury, and forced it to recall its coaches.



Backs to the wall: security guards formed a human chain in a vain attempt to keep protesters from a digger

Ragtag army devises its tactics in the pub

WITH their unkempt looks the growing band of protesters might appear to be a ragtag army, but they have planned their campaign carefully for six months. Tactics are fixed at regular strategy meetings held round camp fires, in the pubs of Newbury or in the cramped town centre office of Friends of the Earth.

At each one different "cells" with specialist knowledge pass on their expertise: some are "tree defenders", while others, including those behind the successful tripod protest on Monday, are skilled in tried and tested tactics in the battle known as "reclaiming the streets".

Simon Festing, of Friends of the Earth, said: "We have many different cells which work on our own style of tactic. At the moment our main strategy is to take the fight to them as much as possible, as you saw at the coach firm this morning. At the heart of the philosophy is 'the simpler the better'. A lot of it goes back to Gandhi and the whole idea of peaceful protest. One of the keys is outsmarting them and coming up with new ideas."

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Dinosaurs die yet another death

By NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

COLLAPSING stars have joined the list of cancer scares, and the dinosaurs are claimed to have been among the first victims.

A new theory from an American astrophysicist says that a dying star in the Milky Way would send out millions of particles that could cause "tissue damage to living things on Earth."

Dr Juan Collar, of the University of South Carolina, has calculated that a star within 20 light years of Earth collapses about every 100 million years. The dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago.

A star's collapse — caused when it runs out of material to burn — generates a huge number of invisible, weightless particles called neutrinos, which spread outwards.

Dr Collar's theory, to be propounded in the journal *Physical Review Letters*, joins about 200 explanations of why the dinosaurs died. The most probable remains the impact of a huge asteroid or comet, altering the climate.

Neutrinos are chargeless, massless particles which usually pass straight through everything they meet without harm. But Dr Collar argues that a blizzard of neutrinos at a certain intensity would affect the nuclei of tissue atoms, causing fatal cancers.

Ministers may lose traditional accessory

By NIGEL WILLIAMSON
WHITEHALL CORRESPONDENT

MINISTERIAL red boxes could become a thing of the past under the Cabinet Office's vision of a paper-free Whitehall, unveiled yesterday.

The Government's "office of the future" was on display at an emerging-technology exhibition in Westminster. The aim is to make the resources of Whitehall available to ministers while they are travelling, at home and on official visits.

Using a fictional scenario of an oil slick off the English coast, the Cabinet Office demonstrated how a minister on the scene could hold conferences with and receive diagrams from his private secretary in Whitehall, and conduct three-way press interviews. Civil servants and ministers would access the new system via voice recognition and finger-print identification.

Roger Freeman, the Public Service Minister, said: "The exotic is becoming commonplace and the fanciful is becoming reality." Not long ago the systems which had been demonstrated "belonged solely in the world of *Star Trek*," he said. Now every minister could expect to be using such technology by 2000.

A Central Information Technology Unit has been set up, reporting to Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister.

Gallery celebrates surreal bequest

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

EDINBURGH will have one of the world's best collections of Dadaist and Surrealist works thanks to a bequest to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

Masters such as Dali, Delvaux, Duchamp, Man Ray, Magritte and Miró are represented in the collection left by Gabrielle Keller, champion golfer, benefactor and collector of modern art, who died last December aged 87. Manuscripts of the period have also been bequeathed to the gallery. Mrs Keller also bought Surrealist-influenced works by Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud.

Among some 136 paintings, sculptures, prints and drawings are Bacon's early *Figure Study I*, 1945-46, featuring a tweed overcoat, hat and dying flowers; Magritte's *Magic Mirror*, his 1929 painting that plays with words; and Delvaux's enigmatic *Street of the Tram*, 1938-39, a dreamlike image of two nudes and a tram car in an industrial landscape.

The manuscripts and artists' books include correspondence, largely unpublished, between Dali and André Breton, from 1930 to

1939. They show sharp differences of opinion over Surrealism and Breton's efforts to make Dali conform to Surrealist orthodoxy, according to Richard Calvocoressi, keeper of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

Other letters, dating from 1933-34, reveal Breton's anxiety over Dali's fascination with Hitler and his ambivalent attitude to Lenin. "In one of February 3, 1934, Breton informs Dali that the decision has been taken at a general assembly of Surrealists to exclude him from the group because he has been found guilty of 'counter-revolutionary acts tending to the glorification of Hitlerian Fascism'." The decision was revoked later and friendly relations resumed because Dali defended himself so well.

Mr Calvocoressi said that the Keller bequest would complement the rich collection of Dada and Surrealist work already at the Scottish gallery — offering the most comprehensive collection of its kind in Britain and one of the finest in the world. "This is unquestionably the most exciting gift since the gallery opened in 1960," he added.

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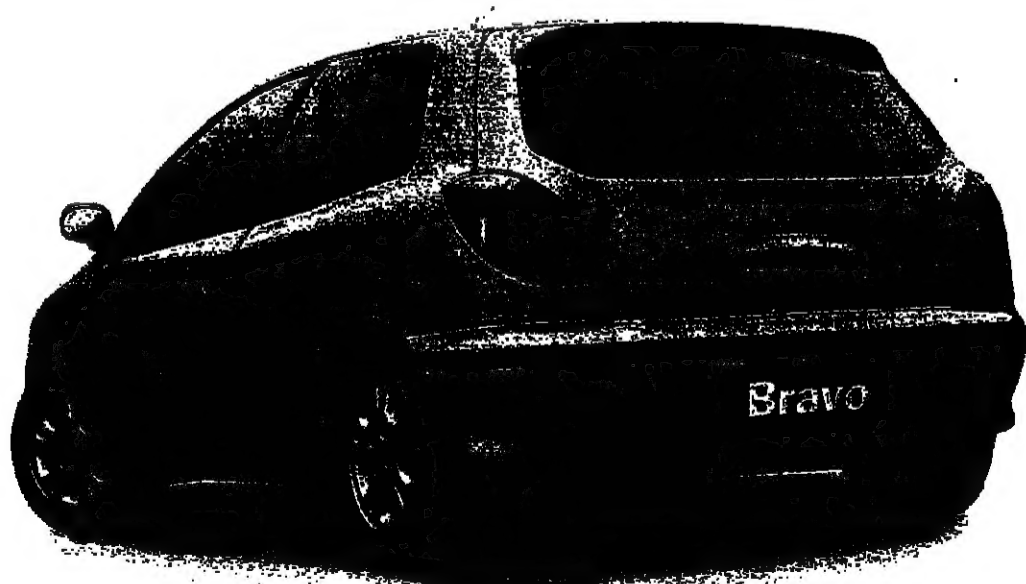
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مركز أمن الأهل

Senior officers sceptical as ministry orders retreat from the high street

Services forced to seek recruits in Jobcentres

BY MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

MORE than 130 high-street recruiting offices are to close after the Ministry of Defence decided to advertise Armed Forces vacancies in 1,100 Jobcentres. The new route into the Royal Navy, Army or RAF, initially proposed to save money, is now seen as a way of enticing more young people to enlist.

The Services cut manpower by 30 per cent at the end of the Cold War, and potential recruits still appear to believe recruiting has stopped. However, many sections, especially the infantry and the Parachute Regiment, are suffering serious shortages.

Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, who with Nicholas Soames, the Armed Forces Minister, announced the new move, said yesterday that the employment service would be able to "reach those who may not have considered the job opportunities that the forces can offer". She added: "In particular people may not be aware of the skilled jobs available such as mechanics, drivers, cartographers, cooks and many more."

Some senior military figures, however, are sceptical about the Jobcentre scheme meeting recruitment needs and are seeking to save some of the military recruitment offices earmarked for closure.

The present 215 traditional service offices are to be reduced to 82 - 39 tri-service careers offices and 43 others, most of which will be for Army recruiting. These offices will be used mainly for the second



Millions of Britons answered the call to enlist during the First World War in such institutions as soldiers' rest rooms, but it was not until 1961, after National Service came to an end, that the first recruiting "shops" began to appear in high streets.

The earliest form of recruiting, for the Royal Navy, had to be carried out by press gangs who "persuaded" men to join a ship's crew. Pressing people into service started as early as the 13th century but ceased, albeit unofficially, when improved pay and conditions in the early 1800s encouraged voluntary recruits.

The navy was always short of volunteers and the press gangs, composed of tough petty officers and seamen, scoured seaports for likely recruits. Real sailors hid or fled, and rather than return empty-handed, the gangs sometimes seized people who knew nothing about the sea. Sheriffs and mayors often supplied the press gangs with people by clearing out the prisons. However, after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in 1815, such forms of compulsory enlistment were no longer required.

help to raise the profile of the Services and encourage recruitment.

Recruiting offices used to be a major target for the IRA and regular surveillance was carried out by police anti-terrorist units. In 1990 a bomb went off at an Army recruiting office in Derby and in 1992 a soldier who worked at the centre was shot in the head.

The decision to use Jobcentres to advertise vacancies, which currently stand at 17,500, followed a pilot scheme at 90 Jobcentres in six locations, including Edinburgh, Gloucester, Norwich and Swansea. In six months there were 321 enlistments and 67 applications are still being processed.

The Army will be undermanned by around 2,000 soldiers this year, mainly in the infantry, Royal Artillery and Royal Armoured Corps. Some 400 Gurkhas due to be made redundant have been retrained to help to meet the dramatic shortfall in recruits, and a £1,400 cash bonus is now offered to soldiers to persuade them to stay on for three years.

Commanding officers of battalions are to be given an extra £1.5 million to be used specifically for recruiting in their local areas.

Commodore Ian Somerville, director of naval recruiting, said the Royal Navy wanted to take on just over 5,000 personnel in the next financial year, including 1,200 for the Royal Marines.

Mr Soames insisted that the manpower cuts in the Services had not gone too far but stressed the need to carry on recruiting. "Who would have



Pilot-scheme recruits James Stallabrass, left, Kerry Duckenfield and Scott Robertson

thought a year ago that we would be sending 13,000 troops to Bosnia?"

He dismissed as "fanciful nonsense" claims by Labour that the shortfall implied a failure in the recruiting system. He said the Services, like everyone else, were operating in an "extremely competitive job market". With the

Jobcentres' help it would now be possible to reach a broader range of people. He said he hoped more from the ethnic communities would be attracted to a career in the forces.

Mr Soames said that the cuts in manpower had largely affected older personnel and there was always a need to recruit young people. He added:

"From today young men and women will be able to walk into any of the 1,100 Jobcentres and see the many skilled jobs that are available in the three Services."

"I hope that young people who had not previously considered a career in the armed forces will be attracted by the wide variety of jobs on offer."

Footballer fined for airport bag theft

The Arsenal footballer David Hillier was fined £750 yesterday after he admitted stealing a bag at Gatwick. The midfielder's solicitor said the theft was an act of stupidity which had destroyed Hillier's soccer form. He was now on the transfer list.

Magistrates at Crawley, West Sussex, were told that Hillier, 26, stole the bag with his friends Wayne Burnett, 24, a Bolton Wanderers player, and Adam Old, 31, a computer consultant. The three men, from London, were each fined £750 and ordered to pay £970 compensation to the bag's owner, a Danish businessman.

Port picketed

More than 100 sacked Liverpool dockers picketed the port of Sheerness, where workers were recruited to replace them. Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, which also runs the Kent port, dismissed 500 dockers in September after they refused to cross picket lines of a separate dispute.

Smuggler escapes

A Belgian drug smuggler was on the run yesterday from Downview Prison in Barnstead, Surrey. Jacques Maezele, 51, serving 4½ years, was reported missing on Tuesday night. Police believe he may have been driven away in a Vauxhall Cavalier seen earlier in the prison car park.

Class had to strip

The headmaster of a school where children had to strip as a teacher searched for a stolen pen has apologised to parents. Twenty 12 and 13-year-olds undressed in their underwear at the Cardinal Wiseman Roman Catholic School in Potter's Green, Coventry.

Turned in

A car that sped away from a policeman in Torquay was chased by a patrol car to Newton Abbot - where it took a wrong turn into a police station car park. Two youths will appear in court tomorrow charged with aggravated vehicle-taking and burglary.

CPS man jailed

Andrew Woodfine, 26, a legal administrator for the Crown Prosecution Service in Durham, was jailed for 12 months by Durham Crown Court for supplying Ecstasy and possessing amphetamines. He sold two Ecstasy tablets to a plainclothes detective at a rave.

Boat fire deaths

A mother and her two children who died as they swept through their riverboat on the Oxford Canal at Wolvercote, Oxfordshire, on Tuesday had just been told they were to move to a council house. Sarah Lowe, 30, Ben, 6, and Louise, 3, were asleep when the fire started.

War pensions

Staff are being recruited to ensure that all war widows entitled to a pension receive it by April. The 1995 Pension Act restores the £143-a-week pension to war widows whose subsequent marriage has ended. However, the payment may reduce benefits received.

East eats West

Civic leaders from Stupini, near Moscow, met the British counterparts in Slough, Berkshire, home of Mars bars in the UK, to celebrate the opening of the confectioner's first factory in Russia. The two parties exchanged somewhat predictable gifts: Mars bars.

Bad news for Daleks as the doctor returns

BY A STAFF REPORTER

DOCTOR WHO is to be resurrected to the small screen with Paul McGann as the latest incarnation of the Time Lord. The 36-year-old star of *The Monocled Mutineer* saw off Sting, Simon Callow and Alan Rickman to become the eighth incumbent of the role since 1963.

He will star in a two-hour film to be made for television, produced jointly by BBC Worldwide and Universal Television in America. If the film proves popular there are plans for six more.

Doctor Who was last seen on television in 1989, but ratings slumped to four million viewers and the series was axed. The new production has a £5 million budget and will be broadcast in the United States and Britain later this year.

McGann said yesterday: "I loved *Doctor Who* as a kid - William Hartnell used to terrify me. My favourite was the Yeti, but the Daleks never did it for me - they couldn't run upstairs."

One fan of the series welcomed the news. Alexandra Leavelle-Saunders, owner of a Dr Who shop in East Ham, east London, said: "I am absolutely delighted. Paul McGann has just the right silent, mysterious quality that *Doctor Who* needs. There is no way it will seem outdated. All it needs is good writers, good actors and new technology, and now we've got all that. I can't wait."

Doctor Who was first screened on November 23, 1963, with William Hartnell in the title role. He was followed by Patrick Troughton (1966-1970), Jon Pertwee (1970-1974), Tom Baker (1974-1982), Peter Davison (1982-1984), Colin Baker (1984-1987) and Sylvester McCoy (1987-1989).

Britain's last remaining police box - the model for *Doctor Who*'s time-travelling Tardis - is to be restored. It was one of scores found in the capital until 1969, when they were scrapped by the Metropolitan Police. The surviving example is at Hendon Police Training College.



McGann: preferred Yetis to Daleks

Clarke's staff fails to pay bills on time

SMALL businesses yesterday called for Kenneth Clarke to be put on a blacklist after government figures showed that more than a quarter of the Treasury's bills are paid late.

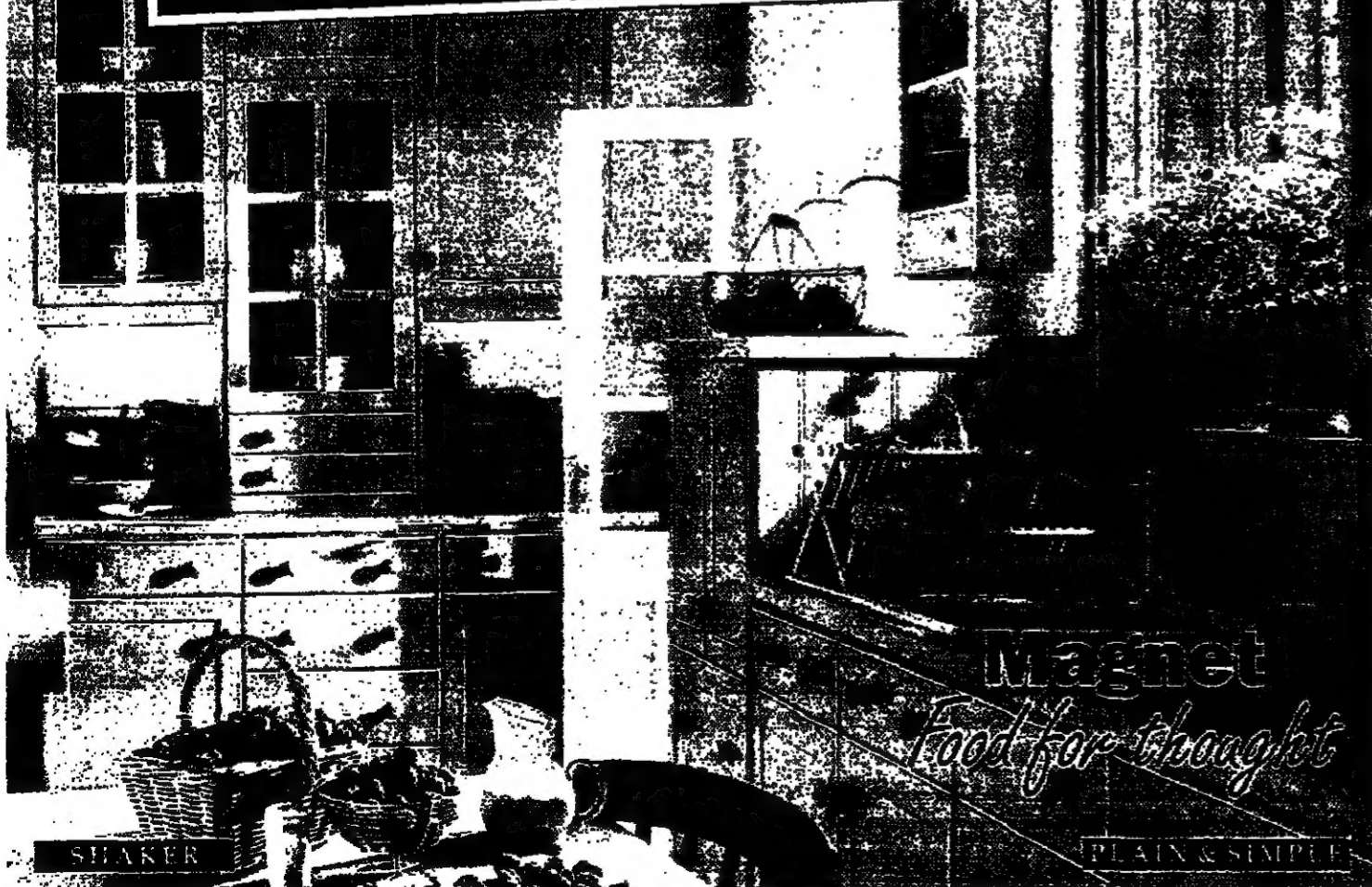
Last year the Chancellor's department failed to settle 28 per cent of its bills within 30 days or when required by contracts, the worst figure for any government department.

The Federation of Small Businesses said: "We have long called for a blacklist of large companies who do not pay up on time and the Chancellor and the Treasury should go on this list." Mr Clarke has announced several schemes to persuade businesses to settle bills promptly.

Labour will ask for an explanation in the Commons this afternoon. The Treasury blamed temporary staff problems, adding: "We try to pay a lot of our bills in ten days."

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Hospitals unnecessary

Hard-up Church storms another bishop's castle

Medieval marvels with Gothic elegance

Dorrell denies £1bn efficiency drive is rationing Hospitals told to reduce 'unnecessary' Caesareans

By JEREMY LAURANCE, HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

A DRIVE to reduce unnecessary Caesarean sections was launched by Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, yesterday as part of a campaign to save £1 billion being wasted on ineffective NHS treatments.

Almost 100,000 women undergo Caesareans each year and the rate has more than doubled in the past 20 years. In some hospitals, more than 20 per cent of women have the operation, compared with fewer than 10 per cent in others. Mr Dorrell said the rates in some hospitals were "surprisingly high" and should be questioned.

Launching the document *Promoting Clinical Effectiveness*, Mr Dorrell said it was vital for doctors and health authorities to keep pace with the rapidly changing clinical scene. More than 30,000 medical journals are published around the world and it is impossible for most doctors to keep track of the latest advances. Under the initiative,

they are to be provided with easily accessible information on effective treatments and may be required to justify clinical judgments that differ from the norm. Authorities will be required to show that they are switching funds from ineffective treatments to those of proven value.

Mr Dorrell cited hospitals with high Caesarean rates as an example that doctors and managers should be examining. "It doesn't mean the clinicians are wrong but it does mean that they have to explain why they are out of line."

Latest figures on Caesareans, collected by the National Childbirth Trust, show a national rate of 15.3 per cent of births in 1993-94, the highest ever. Rates varied between hospitals from under 10 per cent at Bedford and Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire; to more than 20 per cent at Buchanan Hospital, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex;

Leighton Hospital, Crewe, Cheshire; and Worcester Royal Infirmary.

Rates were also above 20 per cent at Bradford Royal Infirmary, Hammersmith, and Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea hospitals, London, Liverpool Maternity Hospital and St David's Hospital, Bangor, Gwynedd. Large hospitals that deal with more complex cases would expect to have higher Caesarean rates.

Many hospitals routinely perform Caesareans on women who have previously had one, although there is no evidence that it improves the outcome. Women complain that they are being subjected to an unnecessary operation with increased risks at a critical point in their lives.

The National Childbirth Trust says that increased medical intervention in labour, such as foetal monitoring, and fear of litigation is driving the trend to more Caesareans. Mary Newburn, head of poli-

cy research, said: "Fear of litigation should not be driving maternity care. Caesarean birth is a major operation from which it takes six weeks to recover, at a very important time for the whole family — getting to know and care for a new baby."

Promoting Clinical Effectiveness, which is backed by the Royal Medical Colleges, says that the treatment provided by doctors "is still insufficiently responsive to the changing evidence of best practice". Mr Dorrell denied that the aim was to ration treatments, but was to obtain the best quality of care at the best value. "We are using science to address questions of value, not to reduce costs," he said.

Harriet Harman, the Shadow Health Secretary, dismissed Mr Dorrell's campaign for clinical effectiveness as a "smokescreen for rationing". "It is nothing but a drive to cut costs," she said.



Debbie Chippington Derrick and her son Maxwell, the only one of her four children not born by Caesarean

'Evidence on natural births being ignored'

AFTER her third Caesarean section, Debbie Chippington Derrick decided the only way to ensure that her fourth pregnancy would end in a natural birth was to pay for it. She spent £2,500 hiring an independent midwife and had her son, Maxwell, at home.

"It was a straightforward eight-hour labour. I had no pain relief, no stitches, no intervention of any kind. Had I been under the NHS I would have been automatically booked for a Caesarean.

As soon as you have had two, the attitude of the obstetricians changes."

Mrs Chippington Derrick, 36, of Camberley, Surrey, said the *Guide to Effective Care in Pregnancy and Childbirth*, produced by the UK Cochrane Centre in Oxford, showed the chances of a natural birth did not depend on the reasons for the first Caesarean.

She said her first Caesarean was carried out after a series of interventions, such as pain relief which left her drowsy

and a foetal heart monitor, had left her unable to cope. Her second Caesarean, in a different hospital, was performed when she was ten days overdue, after attempts to induce her over eight days had failed. In her first pregnancy she had been three weeks late.

"That is what women encounter all the time. If you happen to be in a different hospital, a different policy will be followed. Evidence on effectiveness is being ignored."



Dr Stevenson outside his 200-year-old thatched home

Hard-up Church storms another bishop's castle

By RUSSELL JENKINS AND VEEMA SHAH

THE Bishop of Worcester is expected to be the next senior Anglican cleric to face "eviction" from his historic home, the Church Commissioners confirmed yesterday. Hartlebury Castle, where the Right Rev Philip Goodrich lives, could fetch £750,000.

The new Bishop of Portsmouth, Dr Kenneth Stevenson, has already been asked to leave his 200-year-old thatched residence, Bishopswood, in Fareham, in two years' time and to move his family into a £300,000 six-bedroom Victorian villa. There is a question mark over the future of 14 other bishops' homes under a Church of England seven-year review.

Dr Stevenson's chaplain, Canon Howard Baker, said yesterday of the rehousing plan: "He was unhappy initially, but the decision here was to move into not only a smaller house but one which will suit the needs of a bishop in the 21st century."

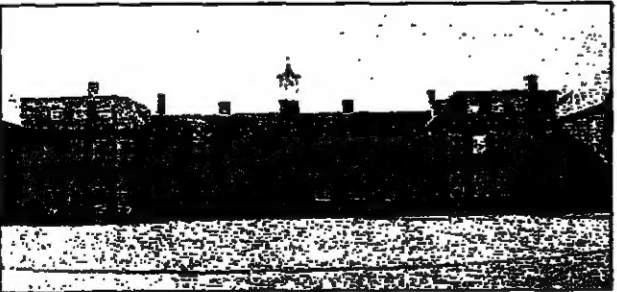
Dr Stevenson, who was enthroned shortly before Christmas, said: "We are looking forward to moving into a better house. The thatched roof is the largest in the south of England and needs to be

replaced in ten years and we cannot get a grant for that." Behind the impressive facades of episcopal castles, palaces and residences, their occupants are struggling to pay heating bills. Mary Loudon, who interviewed clergy for her book *Revelations*, said: "Never go and stay with a bishop. It's freezing."

Bishops are paid £24,990 a year, plus a car and an allowance to pay a small staff for their office and house. Under church guidelines, their residences should have a dining room for ten to 12 guests, a commensurate kitchen, drawing room, study, office, chapel, sitting room and six bedrooms.

Bishops' homes still under review include those at Blackburn, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Lichfield, Lincoln, Liverpool, Norwich, Ripon, the Isle of Man, Southwell and Truro.

Miss Loudon believes the Church should sell all clergy homes, pay the occupants enough to buy their own and hire offices and meeting halls. This would help to solve financial difficulties and make clergy face the housing problems their parishioners have, she says.



Worcester's Hartlebury Castle may be sold for £750,000

Medieval marvels vie with Gothic elegance

By RACHEL KELLY, PROPERTY CORRESPONDENT

THE Church of England owns three castles and five palaces among its 44 bishops' homes, in addition to Lambeth Palace, home of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A claim to be the most elegant could be made by Auckland Castle, home of the new Bishop of Durham, the Right Rev Michael Turnbull, which has survived the church's review.

Its Gothic gateway is topped by a turreted clock and weather vane. The house has state rooms with high ceilings, some covered in coats of arms, and eight bedrooms.

The grandest may be Peterborough Palace, built partly in

the 11th century on a far bigger scale. It has seven lavatories and bathroom-sized bedrooms. The hall can seat 100 for lunch and the sitting room takes 50.

The future Bishop of Peterborough — the appointment is vacant — will live in part of the palace but the commissioners are looking at ways to make the building pay its way.

Bishopsthorpe, home of the Archbishop of York, stands in 19 acres of gardens. Originally a manor house, it was later enlarged and rebuilt. Wolvesey Palace stands on the site where the bishops of Winchester have had their homes since the 12th century.

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Local Tories blame party's high command for failing to expose black businessman's lies

Candidate's imaginative CV was never checked

BY ANDREW PIERCE AND KATE ALDERSON

CONSERVATIVE Central Office was blamed last night for the debacle over a black parliamentary candidate who will be deselected next week for lying about his past to local party officials.

Hugh Neil, 32, will be dropped as candidate for the marginal seat of Hyndburn in Lancashire because of irregularities in the curriculum vitae that he submitted to the selection committee. But a straight-forward check on his background would have shown that only four years before he had been deselected as candidate for Wallsend after the collapse of his estate agency business.

Closer scrutiny of Mr Neil's curriculum vitae has revealed a host of bogus claims about his academic, political and business career. The false claims include his chairmanship of "Britain's 19th largest building society", the Kenton and Middlesex, which has never traded, and a doctorate in business administration at Manchester business school. Mr Neil, a bachelor, also falsely claimed to have been an adviser to the late Lord Joseph. Margaret Thatcher's mentor.

The party high command failed to act because Mr Neil was one of only a handful of black candidates. A Central Office official said: "Alarm bells should have rung after

he was deselected. He survived the cull of the candidates list after the election because he was black. We were sensitive because of the row over John Taylor, the defeated black candidate in Cheltenham." Mr Taylor narrowly lost the Tory seat in 1992 after being described as a "nigger" by constituency members.

Despite the bitterness left by Mr Neil's abrupt departure from Wallsend, only months before the 1992 general election, Central Office failed to investigate him and his name remained on its approved list of candidates.

In series of telephone calls

yesterday, *The Times* established that Mr Neil had financed his estate agency, Wotton Flint, with a £17,000 business development loan from Brent Council. It was awarded in 1986, when the Tories were in power. They had gained control of the council in 1983 when Mr Neil's mother, Ambrosine, a Labour councillor, defected to the Tories. He was dropped as a Tory candidate in a council by-election in 1988 when he defaulted on his loan. In 1990 Brent Council, again under Tory control, wrote off the loan when the estate agency went into liquidation.

It was also established that contrary to his CV, Mr Neil had never had any connection with Harvard University. Claims that he had worked for the Polish government were discounted by the Polish embassy in London.

Although he claimed membership of the Bow Group, the Foreign Affairs Forum, and the Centre for Policy Studies, all three denied that he had ever been a member. The Chartered Institute of Marketing suspended his membership because of unpaid fees. He ceased to be a member of the Institute of Directors in June 1991 because of his "failure to pay amounts owing to the institute".

Mr Neil said last night: "You are part of a bourgeois plot. I am the victim of

institutionalised racism in the media and Tory party." A local party official said last night: "He should have been permanently moved by Central Office years ago. Attempts to discover why Mr Neil was allowed to move from constituency to constituency have met with silence." In the predominantly white working-class constituency, which includes Accrington, he had impressed party members with his academic air and intelligent conversation about world affairs. Stan Horne, deputy chairman of Hyndburn Tories, said: "I thought he was an outstanding candidate. I told the local paper his political capability was unlimited. He was an impressive speaker. Not full of waffle.

In the words of a famous song, he was young, gifted and black." However, party officials began to be troubled by doubts about him. He could never be contacted at his office at Manchester Business School. It transpired that he did not have one. At the party conference in Blackpool last year, they were advised by

officials from other local parties to drop him.

In November Mr Horne discovered that Mr Neil's membership of the party had lapsed in 1990 when he left the City of London and Westminster South Conservative Association (1989-90). Adviser to The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph (the late Lord Joseph), Secretary of State for Education and Science (1989-97).

Approved parliamentary candidate since 1986. Contested Queens Park ward in local council elections (1989).

Word chairman for Brent East Conservative Association (1989-90).

Brent East Conservative Association Finance and General Purposes Committee (1989-90).

Member of the board of governors at Kiburn Polytechnic (1984).

Academic board governor for Kiburn Polytechnic (1984).

Student Union president for Kiburn Polytechnic (1984).

Experiences in four general elections and council elections.

Member of Bow Group, Foreign Affairs Forum, Centre for Policy Studies and Institute of Directors.

Interests: The economy, education and foreign affairs.

Date of biography February 1995.

The CV that helped to persuade Hyndburn Tories to select Hugh Neil as their parliamentary candidate

HUGH NEIL: CURRICULUM VITAE
(False statements in bold type)

Occupation: International management consultant

Education: Doctor of Business Administration (DBA): Manchester Business School, Harvard Business School
Master of Business Administration (MBA): University of Lancaster
Bachelor of Arts (BA) (Hons) Social Sciences: University of Westminster
The Chartered Institute of Marketing (DipM MCM)

Political: Political and management consultant to the Polish government (1983-94)
Member of environment task force (1990)
City of London and Westminster South Conservative Association (1989-90)
Adviser to The Rt Hon Sir Keith Joseph (the late Lord Joseph), Secretary of State for Education and Science (1989-97)
Approved parliamentary candidate since 1986
Contested Queens Park ward in local council elections (1989)
Word chairman for Brent East Conservative Association (1989-90)
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Member of the board of governors at Kiburn Polytechnic (1984)
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Student Union president for Kiburn Polytechnic (1984)
Experiences in four general elections and council elections
Member of Bow Group, Foreign Affairs Forum, Centre for Policy Studies and Institute of Directors

Interests: The economy, education and foreign affairs

Date of biography February 1995



character who convinced himself that everything he said was true. He told colleagues at Hyndburn that he had had a BMW and a Toyota sports car. They only ever saw him driving a battered Montego. In December a motion of no confidence in him was passed by 53 votes to 16 and he was urged to resign.

Mr Horne said last night: "He was black when we selected him. The charges of racism against our association are absolute rubbish. His deselection comes down to his business dealings. I am sad this whole episode has occurred. It is not enough to be seen to be above reproach as a candidate. You have to be above reproach."

Mr Neil is from a family of six children. His parents, both now dead, moved to London from the West Indies 35 years ago. In an interview with the *Accrington Observer* he described General Colin Powell and Baroness Thatcher as his heroes. He said the best advice he had received was from Lady Thatcher: "Always be true to your ability and destiny." Lady Thatcher's office said they had never heard of Mr Neil.

He claimed to have been a schoolfriend of the sprinter Linford Christie and said that he expected to be MP for Hyndburn. Asked what his catchphrase would be, he replied: "Hugh Neil — a man of the people, for the people."



Lord Joseph: Mr Neil falsely claimed to have been one of the Cabinet minister's advisers

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Thatcher's role as prophet is true to tradition

Margaret Thatcher is not the first former Prime Minister to cause waves for a successor. Exactly 100 years ago this September, Gladstone descended on Liverpool like a prophet from the hills, according to his latest biographer, Roy Jenkins, and delivered a powerful blast of protest over Turkish atrocities in Armenia. It caused quite a stir, not least because of the parallels with his campaign over the slaughter of Christians in Bulgaria 20 years earlier. But in autumn 1896 the GOM was nearly 87 and it was his last hurrah. Still, it was enough to precipitate the resignation of Rosebery as Liberal leader 12 days later. He complained that the Gladstone speech was "the final straw on his back". John Major is much more resolute than the timesome and resignation-prone Rosebery, who was a better writer than a politician.

Baroness Thatcher is not alone among former party leaders in still being able to command headlines. Former Prime Ministers have behaved in very different ways. Several — Salisbury, Campbell-Bannerman, Bonar Law, Macdonald and Neville Chamberlain — have died soon afterwards, in some cases having resigned because of fatal illness. Eden was in mixed health for the 20 years he survived, but he had anyway been largely discredited by the Suez crisis. Baldwin's high reputation on retirement was soon undermined by the collapse of appeasement and he had a lonely last few years. Churchill and Wilson lived for 10 and 19 years respectively after leaving Downing Street, but for most of the time were senile, in Wilson's sad case prematurely so.

Only a few of the long-time survivors avoided controversy altogether. Attlee lived over a decade after giving up the Labour leadership and, as might be expected for such a stickler to the proprieties, did not interfere with his successors. Macmillan contented himself with his memoirs for more than a decade before enjoying the limelight in his last few emboldened years as a nostalgic critic of Thatcher.

What Lady Thatcher had in common with Gladstone was the ability to make the weather, in Churchill's vivid phrase about Joseph Chamberlain. So in retirement, both could still draw big audiences and press attention. But Lady Thatcher is now more of a symbol than a force. She will be applauded tonight for what she did rather than what she can do, for touching the hearts of her followers rather than as a potential leader of a crusade. Like Gladstone, she is now a prophet, one who descends from Concorde rather than the hills.

PETER RIDDELL

New role for MI5 backed

PLANS to expand the role of MI5 to include supporting the police in the fight against organised crime won cross-party support in the Commons last night.

Opening the second reading debate of the Security Service Bill, Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, said that the

Government should use every resource available to combat criminal gangs, drug traffickers and racketeers.

Jack Straw, Shadow Home Secretary, said Labour welcomed the Bill in principle but had reservations about how accountable MI5 would be to Parliament in its new role.

IN PARLIAMENT

YESTERDAY in the Commons: back-bench debates on the regeneration of coastal communities and the Government's weekly disposal strategy. At 2.30pm, Foreign Office questions were followed by a debate on the Security Service Bill, second reading. In the Lords: debate on the Family Law Bill, Commons debate on the Transport Research Laboratory.

سكس من الناصر

Chechen rebel leader vows bloodshed will continue until Kremlin soldiers leave

Russian troops surround hostage-takers at border

FROM THOMAS DE WAAL
IN MOSCOW

RUSSIAN troops ringed a convoy of buses carrying Chechen gunmen and dozens of captives on the border with Chechnya yesterday on the second day of a hostage seizure, which has thrown the Government into crisis.

Earlier, the gunmen freed thousands of hostages they had held overnight in Kizlyar hospital in Dagestan. The incident appeared to be heading for a peaceful conclusion until the convoy's exit was halted by a bridge blown up by the Russian Army at the village of Pervomayskiy and a new round of negotiations began. The fighters threatened to start shooting hostages if they were not allowed across.

According to a correspondent outside the village, helicopter gunships dropped flares, but there appeared to be no sign of an attack to free the captives. An Interior Ministry colonel from Dagestan, Abubakar Mogamedov, said: "They have blockaded Pervomayskiy and have taken more hostages there." He did not say how many had been seized.

In overnight negotiations, officials from the Dagestan administration struck a deal with the fighters similar to the one that was forged during the almost identical hostage crisis in the town of Budennovsk seven months ago. More than 2,000 captives were freed in return for the gunmen's safe passage after at least 13 civilians and seven policemen died.



Patients tell of 24-hour terror

FROM PHILIPPA FLETCHER IN KIZLYAR

NURSES and volunteers carried patients moaning in fear and pain out of Kizlyar's hospital yesterday after Chechen gunmen abandoned it, leaving the body of a murdered policeman untouched on an upper floor.

Men carrying patients in iron beds jostled with Russian police carrying out mines laid by the gunmen on the lower floors of the grey four-storey building.

Torn sheets fluttered from broken windows and spent cartridges were scattered around on the road outside the hospital. Hot-water pipes punctured in 24 hours of gunfire spat water and steam into the chilly air.

The Chechen fighters, who had threatened to kill their captives unless Russia withdrew troops from their neighbouring separatist region, left unexpectedly in a convoy of buses early yesterday, accompanied by more than 160 hostages. The wounded were among those left behind.

Alla Pradikova, injured when Chechens forced their way into her flat, lay in the hospital entrance, her head peeping out from under an orange blanket. She said that she was at home when the rebels started banging on her door. "We asked them to let us get dressed, but they broke the

door down and started shooting," she said.

Other victims still lay in the hospital, where mattresses have been stuffed into broken windows to stop the draught, and blood-soaked rags lie on the floor.

"The hospital was full, there were at least 3,000 people. Then they went round town and collected more," Muhammad Maladzhiev, duty doctor in the surgery area, said. "People in each department had been wounded in the hand or the foot. They killed a policeman and two old women did not survive the strain."

Shots rang out outside the hospital as the doctor spoke, but it was unclear where the shooting came from. Patients said Russian special forces had shot at the hospital with guns and shells. Dr Maladzhiev's assistant said her son had had to go with the rebels. "I do not know where he is," she said. "Everything has gone from our house."

Kurban Aliyev, who had been receiving treatment in the hospital, said he did not hold a grudge against the rebels. "The Chechens want freedom," he said. "They did not do anything to the civilians. The Russians started shooting and they shot back. They were shooting day and night." (Reuters)

New spy chief chosen in Yeltsin shake-up

BY OUR FOREIGN STAFF

PRESIDENT YELTSIN appointed a new Foreign Intelligence Service head yesterday to succeed Yevgeni Primakov, now Foreign Minister, and gave a warning of more government changes to come. Colonel-General Vyacheslav Trubnikov, 51, a career intelligence officer, has served as Mr Primakov's first deputy since the former Soviet KGB split into several agencies shortly before the Soviet collapse in 1991.

"I have looked closely at him and realised he was a skilled professional, respected by intelligence operatives," Mr Yeltsin said.

Born into a worker's family in the Siberian city of Irkutsk, General Trubnikov joined the KGB in 1967 on graduation

from the Moscow Institute of Foreign Relations. Like his chief, Mr Primakov, the general is an expert in Eastern affairs and spent several years in Asia. The Soviet Government awarded him many decorations, including two Red Star medals.

Tass news agency said he spends his leisure time reading, listening to music and watching films and supports Spartak Moscow.

Mr Yeltsin also ousted the Transport Minister, Vitaly Yefimov, criticised in the press over domestic civil aviation's safety record, and formally dismissed two ministers — Nikolai Travkin and Sergei Belyayev — who have left to take up seats in parliament's lower house.



The convoy of buses heads for the Chechen border

in 24 hours of violence. The Chechens, smiling, wearing Islamic headbands and trailing green, white and red Chechen flags from the bus windows, took about 160 hostages from Kizlyar, including volunteers from local government and the hospital, as well as 30 women and 15 children. One woman in a headscarf and spectacles was shown on television sitting nervously next to a fighter with a rocket launcher between his knees.

President Yeltsin, who has been humiliated by the second mass hostage-taking in seven months, told reporters that the decision to let the gunmen leave had been "tactically correct". He held more talks with his security ministers, whom he lambasted for incompetence. He said that he was now considering several options.

"If they release the hostages there will be one turn of events. If they don't release them another scenario will unfold," he said at an introductory ceremony for Yevgeni Primakov, the new Foreign Minister. Mr Yeltsin later left for Paris to attend François Mitterrand's memorial service.

The release of most of the hostages eased the pressure on the Kremlin, which may be able to mount a military operation against the hostage-takers and try to save some face. Viktor Chernomyrdin,

mittee, has called on the Government to resign.

Even if the drama ends successfully, the Government faces a security situation in which Chechen rebels have proved that they can strike at targets inside Russia at will. "Any peaceful town is defenceless against 100 armed terrorists," said Aleksandr Golts, a commentator for the military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda*.

A former aide to the rebel Chechen leader, General Dzhokhar Dudayev, said that the Chechen forces had several "diversionary detachments" consisting of about 100 fighters, which were ready to carry out raids outside Chechnya. "This is only the beginning," he said.

General Dudayev told reporters in the Chechen hills that there could be "more large-scale incidents". He said that until Russia pulled its troops out of Chechnya, "the bloodshed will not end".

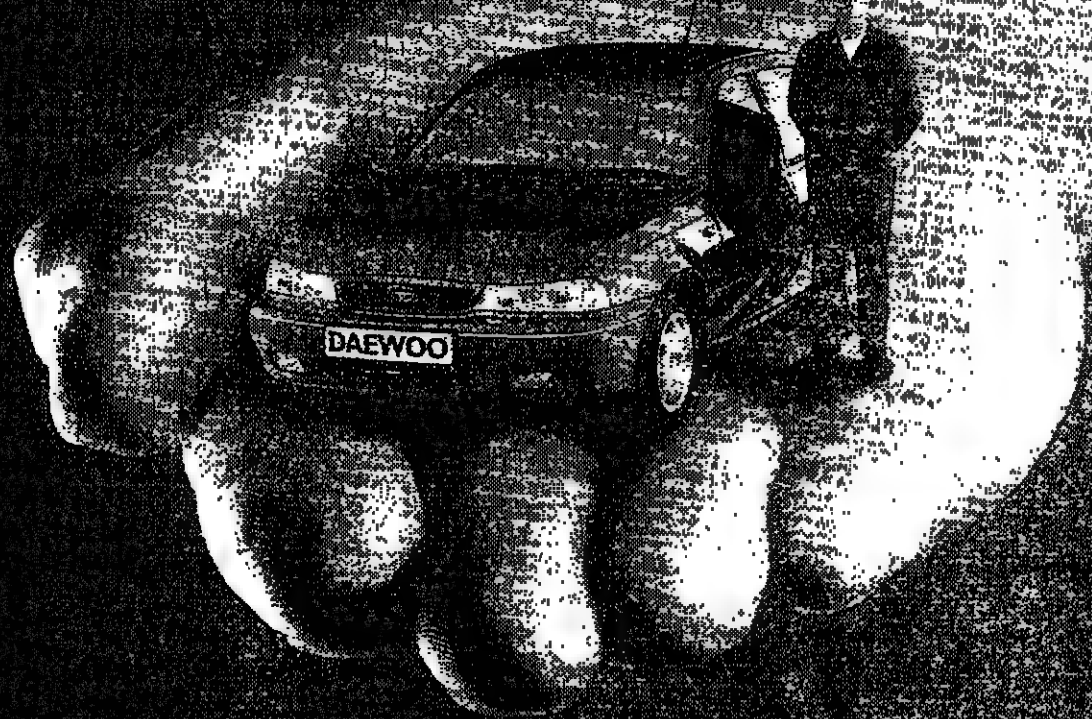
Ancient enemies, page 18



A Kizlyar man weeps for his dead grandson yesterday as he passes the hospital that was commandeered by gunmen

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By ROGER BOVENS

His actual wealth is a mystery. During the 1980s he picked up many

The truth is that he wants to replay history. The shipyards were the springboard for the 1980 Solidarity revolution that eventually broke the spine of communist rule in Poland.

namely, the move marks the beginning of the next stage of his political career. It certainly means trouble for the likes of Jozef Oleksy, the Prime Minister who, in the last days of Mr Walesa's presidency, was accused of passing secrets to the KGB. Yester-

But the corruption of the communist regime was mirrored in the yards — meat shortages, arbitrary price rises, poor safety standards and political sackings enraged the workforce — and eventually Mr Walesa

Life should be somewhat easier for the born-again worker this time. This is perhaps just as well: he no longer has the physique for jumping over shipyard fences.

FROM STACY SULLIVAN IN SARAJEVO

FROM SEAN MAGUIRE IN SARAJEVO

Serb pleas to delay the transfer have fallen on deaf ears. Having fought for the

Toti Librizzi outside the Palermo hotel where Giuseppe Di Stefano has lived in a three-room suite for 50 years

**FROM DANIEL WAKIN
IN PALESTINE**

This is the baron's existence as pieced together from those who know him. He lives under a Mafia-imposed exile, according to a story told by

Richard Wagner completed *Parsifal* here. Lucky Luciano, the Mafia boss, ate in its restaurant. Raymond Rou-



Wagner stayed in hotel

These days he sees only a trusty handful of hotel staff. He used to listen to classical music, but the stereo seems to be gone. Now television news can be heard from outside the suite door, but no one answers a knock — protecting this most Sicilian of mysteries. (AP)

FROM JOHN CARR
IN ATHENS

Details about Mr Papandreou's condition are scarce. A step away from death the week before Christmas, he was this week being given mild muscular exercise by American therapists. Yesterday, however, he was racked by a fever and his doctors continued to rule out any significant recovery.

Leading article, page 19

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

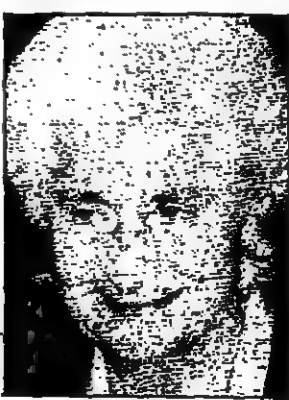
Today is a national day of mourning in France. Dozens of world leaders are expected at a memorial Mass this morning in Notre Dame cathedral, including the Prince of Wales, John Major and President Yeltsin. M Mitterand's funeral and burial at his birthplace of Jarnac, southwest France, will take place at the same time, attended only by family and close friends. Last night thousands went to La Bastille for a Socialist rally in his memory.

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN ROME

Italy considers it inconceivable to think of extending the January 1999 deadline for European monetary union (EMU), even if it fails to make the grade when the EU picks the first members in early 1998, Boris Biancheri, the new chief of the Foreign Ministry, said. "If it does not join at the beginning, it will do so after a slight delay." Under Susanna Agnelli, the Foreign Minister, Signor Biancheri's team is preparing to push what many

Asked by President Scalfaro to stay on, Signor Dini is in-

Italy is determined to keep the "EMU train" moving and hoped that it could show enough progress in bringing down its heavy national debt to convince its partners that it merits a berth in the single currency.



Agnelli: setting pace

BY MICHAEL BINYON
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

He said in London that there were "those who, by denying funding, make the UN ineffective, then say that they are withholding funding because the UN is ineffective."

He did not single out America — by far the largest debtor to the UN — by name, but expressed his general cooperation with the refusal by the Congress in the United

Dr Boutros Ghali said the UN was also weakened by its member states' inability to follow through their decisions. There was a clear commitment from member, but a failure to provide the means to make such undertakings real. "The failure to mobilise and use collective force effectively has caused grave setbacks in Somalia, in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia."

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White House officials doubt whether deal on balanced budget can ever be reached

Republicans try to keep 'revolution' on the move

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

REPUBLICAN leaders were yesterday exploring radical new strategies to advance their "revolution" after the breakdown of their budget negotiations with President Clinton on Tuesday night.

Both sides publicly insisted the negotiations had been suspended, not ended, but privately officials said they had serious doubts whether an agreement on how to balance the budget in seven years was achievable. Wall Street shared those doubts and the Dow Jones index opened sharply lower after plunging 67 points on Tuesday.

Mr Clinton has spent 50 hours in direct talks with Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker, and Robert Dole, the Senate leader, over the past three weeks. Mr Dole said "fundamental differences" remained, and while both sides have made significant compromises neither can give much more without alienating its core supporters.

Mike McCurry, the White House spokesman, said: "The only thing now that is preventing us from getting a balanced budget agreement is Republican insistence that we have a

larger tax cut than the President deems necessary, paid for by Medicare savings that the President feels are unnecessary." A balanced budget is at the heart of the Republicans' drive to put America's economic affairs in order, shrink the federal government and devolve power to the states, but Mr Clinton argues that their plan would devastate health, education and environmental programmes and shred the social safety net.

Officially the negotiations have gone into recess for a week to take stock of the situation. Republicans say they will return to the bargaining table if and when Mr Clinton presents some new ideas, but in the meantime they are exploring alternative ways forward.

One is to woo conservative Democrats who agree with many parts of their balanced budget plan. It is doubtful that the Republicans could win over enough to secure a veto-proof two-thirds majority in both houses, but the more Democrats they can persuade to defect the more pressure they will put on Mr Clinton. Another possible strategy is for the Republicans to ac-



Newt Gingrich, left, and Dick Arney, the House majority leader, listen as Robert Dole struggles to hear a question at a news conference

knowledge that an agreement is unachievable, cobble together a stopgap budget for 1996 to keep the Government ticking over, and take their case to the people in November's congressional and presidential elections.

A Washington Post poll yesterday encouraged the President to stand firm. It gave him a 53 per cent approval rating and compared to 31 per cent for the Republican Congress. By 57 per cent to 36 respondents said Mr Clinton's position on the budget was closer to theirs than the Republicans', and by 47 per cent to 32 they believed the President was trying harder than the Republicans to resolve the issue.

In bald numerical terms Congress and the President have drawn much closer than at the beginning of their talks, but the figures mask deeper ideological differences. For example the Republicans have trimmed their proposed tax cuts from \$245 billion over seven years to \$177 billion, and Mr Clinton is prepared to cut taxes by \$87 billion, but the two sides profoundly disagree on who the beneficiaries should be. The Republicans would now cut only \$253

billion from projected spending on the Medicare and Medicaid health insurance programmes for the elderly and poor, far less than they originally proposed, while Mr Clinton would cut \$183, but the President rejects deep structural changes in the programmes and the end of automatic entitlement to benefits. For good measure Mr Clinton vetoed on Tuesday

night a Republican Bill that would have comprehensively reformed the welfare system by giving the states block grants, letting them fashion their own programmes, and limiting how long people can stay on welfare.

Rifkind gives full backing to Patten

Peking: Malcolm Rifkind yesterday asked China to resume dialogue with Chris Patten, the Governor of Hong Kong, in the final 18 months of British rule in the territory (James Pringle writes).

"It is highly desirable for the British and Chinese sides to have a full dialogue incorporating those who have an important role to play," said the Foreign Secretary.

He said he had also pressed China on alleged abuses in Chinese orphanages and the jailing of the dissident, Wei Jingsheng. Claims that Mr Rifkind had "blundered" during talks with his Chinese counterpart, Qian Qichen, were denied by Hong Kong officials yesterday. "We put no credence on the story."

Britons feared kidnapped

Jakarta: Reports that 14 people, four of them British, have been kidnapped in Baliem Valley, in Indonesia's easternmost province of Irian Jaya, are to be investigated by British Embassy officials.

Sources said the captured group was working for the World Wide Fund for Nature and may also include two Dutch and a German. (APF)

Tokyo minister

Tokyo: Ryutaro Hashimoto, the conservative Japanese Prime Minister-designate, has named Wataru Kubo, 66, secretary-general of the Socialist Party, as Finance Minister. media reports said. (Reuter)

Poisoners killed

Peking: A mother and son have been executed for killing 18 people and making 160 ill in a mass poisoning in southern China. The woman said spirits had driven her to rid the world of bad people. (Reuter)

Brando paroled

Los Angeles: Marlon Brando's son was paroled after serving almost five years for manslaughter, prison officials said. Christian Brando shot his sister's boyfriend at their father's home. (Reuter)

Crash arrests

Khabarovsk: Three Russian crew members of a cargo plane which ploughed into a Zairean market were arrested as aid workers put the death toll at over 350. The flight recorder was found. (Reuter)

Korea arrests

Seoul: Two confidants of Chun Doo-hwan, South Korea's former President, were arrested on charges of collecting slush money from firms. Mr Chun is in jail on charges relating to a 1979 coup. (APF)

Tourist deaths

Guatemala City: Ann Ahern, a British tourist, and an American woman friend have been shot dead at Lake Atitlan, 40 miles from here, police said. Both had been living in Alaska. (AP)

Winner takes all

Bonn: Walter Thiele, 75, a German millionaire, has advertised for a man to look after his "young and beautiful" wife, 29, and his fortune when he dies. He has had hundreds of replies. (Reuter)

OJ Simpson explains his innocence in \$30 video

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

O.J. SIMPSON is ready to put his side of his acquittal, but only to those prepared to spend \$29.95 (£9.50) on his 2½-hour video.

In a staged interview, the former American football star and sports commentator hopes to demolish the notion that his whereabouts were a mystery for 90 minutes during which his former wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman, were murdered 18 months ago. In clips from the video obtained by an American television programme, he claims that the lights were on in his house throughout this time, but that they could not be seen by a limousine driver who came to pick him up and claimed that the whole property was in darkness.

The millions who followed Mr Simpson's year-long murder trial will find such arguments hard to take unless they are among those who rejoiced at his acquittal. Neither he nor his lawyers claimed during the trial that lights were on at his house on the night of June 12, 1994, nor did the defence offer a watertight alibi.

OJ Simpson: The Video comes after mainstream news organisations rejected his terms for an interview. The video, which goes on sale this weekend, is also designed to raise money to fight his legal battle against the families of Brown Simpson and Goldman, who have filed wrongful-death claims against him.

First Lady faces fresh onslaught over 'lies'

BY MARTIN FLETCHER

WHITE House officials were struggling to develop a damage-control strategy yesterday as the attacks on Hillary Clinton's veracity continued.

Alfonse D'Amato, the Senate Whitewater committee chairman, was holding a press conference last night to spell out why he believes the First Lady concealed her involvement with the corrupted bank at the heart of the Whitewater affair, and her central role in the unwarranted 1993 dismissal of the seven-member White House travel office.

Senator D'Amato's committee will hear today sworn evidence from Richard Massey, one of Mrs Clinton's former Rose law firm colleagues, who is expected to undermine further her claims to have had minimal involvement with the bank, Madison Guaranty. The First Lady has said it was Mr Massey, not

she, who secured Madison as a client and did most of Rose's work for the bank.

A memo written by one of Mrs Clinton's close friends during the 1992 campaign suggested that Mr Massey had agreed to go along with those statements, but he has allegedly now told investigators they are not true.

Meanwhile, an ABC News poll indicates that 50 per cent of Americans no longer believe Mrs Clinton is telling the truth about Whitewater, and media criticism has spread to most mainstream newspapers. The Washington Post said: "The First Lady has some explaining to do". The New York Times bemoaned the Clintons' endless "obfuscations".

Striking back, the Clintons' lawyers are suddenly appearing on television shows to condemn the attacks as a partisan witch hunt.

Woman in coma made pregnant

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

A WOMAN who has been in a coma for 11 years has become pregnant and is expected to give birth. The identity of the father is not known, but in a shocking case the woman's family alleges that she was assaulted while she lay, motionless and speechless, in a New York nursing home.

The unnamed 29-year-old, quadriplegic since a car crash in 1985, was moved from the Westfall Health Care Centre in Rochester, New York, when she was discovered to be pregnant. She is now at a hospital where her family hopes the baby will be born in April.

The police have questioned employees, including John Horace, a nursing aide who left after being charged with assaulting a female resident.

Afrikaners to plead for their rights at rally in Pretoria

FROM RAY KENNEDY IN JOHANNESBURG

AFRIKANER rightwingers, who for months have been broodingly quiet as South Africa's transition to democracy has developed, are to try to make their voices heard again at a mass rally against what they describe as infringements of their basic rights.

The rally, which is due to take place in Pretoria on Saturday, is being arranged by the Foundation for Equality Before the Law. The organisation was formed last November by, among others, General Johan Van Der Merwe, the police chief during the final years of apartheid rule.

The African National Congress has described it as an attempt to drag Afrikaners back "into the dark ages of apartheid" and the organisers as "a motley crew of ex-politicians and retired civil



De Klerk: accused of initiating the protest

servants who are unable to accept their loss of influence".

The National Party yesterday strongly denied an ANC claim that the protest had been initiated by its leader, F.W. de Klerk, the Second Deputy President. A spokesman said the ANC did not have the sole right to stage demonstrations and that if other sectors of

society felt strongly about certain issues they should have the right to protest peacefully.

Little has been heard for months of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB), but it is expected to make an effort on Saturday to regain some of its influence. Speakers from the Conservative Party, which boycotted the country's 1994 election, the Freedom Front and the National Party will address the rally.

The organisers also anticipate that there will be a large contingent of disgruntled former members of the defence force. They have urged people to turn up if they feel aggrieved by the prosecution of former senior security officials, such as General Magnus Malan, the former Defence Minister, affirmative action and the treatment by President Mandela's Government of the Afrikaners language.

Snowbound Americans ski to freedom on the Internet

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

CYBERSPACE, that final frontier of the computer-literate, came into its own this week with thousands of snowbound Americans surfing the Internet as a swift remedy for universal cabin fever.

With a third of the United States still buried under record snowfalls, new flurries in Washington and New York yesterday and further blizzards expected in New England this weekend, many on the East Coast gave up all hope of returning to work, instead uploading

spreadsheets and e-mail on terminals at home.

The Blizzard of '96, one of America's worst storms this century, may have left the country paralysed and airports and cities digging themselves out of snowdrifts, but it has offered the first real emergency test for the high-tech world of on-line.

Although detailed weather reports have been popular, sledding in cyberspace for information about closed schools and air terminals, blocked roads and the arrival of snowploughs has proved a less than amusing experience for many who have relied on the traditional chan-

nels of newspapers, television and radio.

Instead, it seems, laptops are being used to relieve the relentless boredom of millions confined to the four square walls of their homes from Alabama to Maine. America on Line, the largest service in the country, said yesterday that usage was up 60 per cent. Special chat lines named Cabin Fever or Snowed In were jammed with people flirting and joking. If not always stimulating, the reprieve was nonetheless constant. "I need a sled," wrote one in Snowed In. "I need a flame-thrower," came the response. "I

need a drink," chimed in another. "People who never had computers before are getting on line," William Giles, a spokesman for ComputerServe, said. "The snowstorm is giving them time to play."

It also offered many the opportunity to work from home. Sherrie Connelly, president of the Strategy Foundation, a Washington-based management consultancy, was helping to run a conference in Pennsylvania, one of the worst hit states, when the storm first struck.

Fortunate enough to return home before becoming snowbound, Mrs Connelly has used the Internet to

stay in touch with others who left the conference and several other delegates still stranded in Philadelphia.

With newspaper deliveries confined to only the largest organisations on already ploughed main roads, on-line services for larger publications yesterday reported a big upsurge in users. The Philadelphia Inquirer, unable to distribute its editions for the first time in its 166-year history at the height of the blizzard, has had 152,000 on-line subscribers in the past two days, more than double its normal output. Digital Ink, the Washington Post service, also had large increases.

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Concluding our series: The truth about male and female menopause...

- Does the male menopause really exist? **Jeremy Laurance** finds that men too can suffer from hormonal changes — and it can be treated
- Hormone replacement therapy brings relief from the classic short-term symptoms of female menopause, but how safe is it in the long term?
- **Rita Carter** assesses the effectiveness of remedies for male baldness



- Opposite, **Leslie Kenton** on how water can heighten your energy and improve your skin
- Simple breathing techniques can improve your mood, increase your resistance to illness and help you to sleep
- **Daniel Johnson** discovers that writers have always been obsessed with ageing

Ageless ageing image © LIFE MAGAZINE/BOBBY NOEL-ADAMS

MALE MENOPAUSE

Sometimes it's the mood that slips first, sometimes the performance. There may be a growing tetchiness, an air of gloom, an unfamiliar brittleness. Or there may be the dreaded limp, as one sufferer put it, a state of permanent detumescence that casts a long shadow over a man's midlife.

The male menopause — so called to distinguish it from the female menopause — is said to be responsible. Until recently, the notion of a male pause of any kind drew concealed contempt from the medical establishment. But gradually the idea that men undergo hormonal changes in parallel with women has gained wider acceptance.

Next year, a version of hormone replacement therapy for men will be available on prescription in Britain. The Androderm patch, which will deliver a measured dose of sex hormone testosterone through the skin, is already licensed in the United States.

However, specialists are concerned that fashion, not clinical need may drive demand. Men with dead-end jobs or dull marriages may seek release from humdrum lives through a treatment already described as an elixir of youth. The women who have to live with newly libidinous partners may see it differently.

Dr Malcolm Carruthers, the Harley Street specialist who has long championed the notion of a male menopause — though he favours the less whimsical term "viropause" — has treated more than 1,000 men over the past eight years. "It is not just a matter of boosting sexual desire. There is a loss of drive in the bedroom and the boardroom, with growing fatigue and irritability that makes men difficult to live with. It is as if they have run out of steam."

The male menopause is gradual and only has serious effects — causing the bone thinning disease osteoporosis, for example — in some men over 50. Two processes appear to be at work. There is a natural decline in testosterone levels and a reduced sensitivity to the hormone, which is produced in the testes. At the same time there is a decline in the mildly androgenic hormones secreted by the ad-

'Men with dead-end jobs or dull marriages may seek release from humdrum lives through an elixir of youth'

renal glands, sometimes referred to as the adrenopause. Replacing the lost hormones with pills or skin patches has been shown to bring physical and psychological benefits and improve general well being in carefully selected patients. But indiscriminate prescribing can be dangerous.

Professor John Grimley Evans, professor of clinical gerontology at the University of Oxford, says: "There is growing interest in whether aspects of the ageing process might be treated by hormonal means. But one doesn't lightly rush in to give testosterone. It can produce unwanted effects such as increased aggression and excessive libido."

There are fears that boost-

Run out of steam? Get a change of life



The medical establishment now accepts that men, like women, undergo a menopause. HRT for men is on the way

FEMALE MENOPAUSE

It was "intellectual decay" that tipped the balance for Dr Miriam Stoppard, the television presenter and author. "In the middle of a sentence I would suddenly fall into a black hole, not being able to get out the next word. It was an early sign of the menopause, so started taking hormone replacement therapy immediately. Within a week I was back to normal."

For Claire Rayner, the agony aunt and author, it was menopausal hot flushes that were "driving me potty". HRT put an immediate stop to them.

The MP Teresa Gorman and the novelist Fay Weldon are also advocates of HRT.

With such testimony, it is not surprising that one in five postmenopausal women are taking HRT and that one in three are predicted to be on it by the year 2000. Actress Kate O'Mara describes HRT as "the last frontier of the emancipation of women". But how safe is it?

The jury is still out, according to Dr Midge Vickers, who is about to start the largest trial of HRT in the world, recruiting 36,000 women to her study.

There is little doubt among doctors that HRT brings relief from the classic short-term symptoms of the menopause — hot flushes, night sweats and vaginal dryness. But it is the long-term effects — when HRT is taken for five to ten years — that views diverge.

HRT is credited with halving the risk of heart disease but raising the risk of breast cancer. It is valuable as a defence against the bone-thinning disease, osteoporosis. But fears that it could increase the likelihood of endometrial cancer have now receded.

Most HRT studies involve only small numbers of women. One of the latest, published in the US journal *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, suggests that it cuts the death rate by half, mainly by reducing the risk of heart disease.

Fears about a link between breast cancer and HRT, which first surfaced five years ago and then receded, were reawakened last year by a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. It showed a 40-50 per cent increase in breast cancer in women who had taken HRT over the long term.



Teresa Gorman takes HRT

'In the short term HRT will bring benefits, but in the long term there is a risk of breast cancer'

for at least five years. Dr Vickers says: "People now feel there may be an increased risk of breast cancer with every extra year of use."

The difficulty for doctors advising women is that most research evidence is based on the old oestrogen-only preparations. When the increase in endometrial cancer was noted, combined preparations, which included progestogen, were introduced, which have largely eliminated this risk. What is not known is the effect of progestogen on heart disease.

Dr Vickers says the question of whether to take HRT is one each woman must weigh up for herself, in consultation with her doctor. "There is little doubt treatment will bring benefits in the short term. In the long term, she will derive some benefit in terms of a lower risk of heart disease and stroke, but that may be at the cost of an increased risk of breast cancer. The question is how important that figure is in her mind."

JEREMY LAURANCE

Keep your hair on, naturally

Men have been seeking a cure for baldness for more than 5,000 years but it is only now that they have come up with remedies — other than wigs and hair weaving — that have any measurable effect. Surprisingly, given the demand for a baldness cure, all the current and emerging treatments were originally developed for other conditions. Their effect on hair was a chance discovery.

Male pattern baldness is hereditary and affects nearly all men sooner or later. It is caused by the effect on the hair follicles of a substance called dihydrotestosterone (DHT) — a by-product of the male sex hormone testosterone. As men get older, more testosterone is converted into DHT and this causes their hair to recede from the temples, or to fall out on the crown.



Elton John: fully covered

A group of drugs called alpha reductase inhibitors stop testosterone being converted into DHT. These drugs were developed to prevent prostate enlargement, but in the course of trials it became apparent that they had an effect on hair loss too. The best known drug of this type is Proscar. It is available only on

REMEDIES FOR BALDNESS

prescription, and it is not yet licensed for use for baldness — though some hair clinics already prescribe it.

At the moment the only drug which is licensed for male pattern baldness is Minoxidil — sold as a lotion called Regaine. Minoxidil was originally developed as a blood pressure controller and, as with Proscar, its effect on hair regrowth only came to light by accident.

Minoxidil does not work for everyone — about one in three men get some hair regrowth and one in ten get really good results. The new hair, however, tends to be rather fluffy, and if you stop using the lotion the regrowth disappears. Best results seem to come from starting as soon as the bald patch appears. Regaine costs

about £25 for a month's supply, and, as you need to use it permanently, the cost of keeping your hair on is £300 a year. Possible side-effects include low blood pressure.

Minoxidil may work better in conjunction with Retinoid acid — a vitamin A derivative related to Retin-A, the anti-wrinkle cream. On its own Retinoid acid has only a slight stimulant effect on thinning hair, but used with Minoxidil it has been shown to increase regrowth by up to 30 per cent.

Retinoid acid is usually used to treat acne, and is not licensed for use in baldness. It can have a very irritant effect on the skin so it is important to get it prescribed through a qualified dermatologist.

If you prefer to try a "natural" cure — ginseng, sesame seeds, Royal Jelly and the traditional Chinese medicinal herb *ban lian cao* (Schizandra prostrata) are all reputed to help hair to regrow. Alternatively, you can get new hair woven in, transplanted or, of course, off the shelf.

RITA CARTER



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The best pills to take

THOSE who are dedicated to health and longevity may be taking up to 40 supplements every day. But pill-popping on this scale is ill-advised unless you are an expert. It could damage your health and your wallet.

Rather than taking each supplement separately, go for a combined product designed to meet your requirements. Health stores now stock a number of anti-ageing formulations, plus "niche" products for post-menopausal women, male sports enthusiasts and so on.

Alternatively, opt for a basic combined vitamin and mineral pill, then top it up with one or two supplements specifically for your health risk or problem. Take your

SUPPLEMENTS

time choosing the basic product and read the labels carefully. Most will give the amount of each ingredient, plus the percentage that it represents of the recommended daily allowance (where there is one). Go for those which give the nearest to 100 per cent. Try to have a look at the tablets before you buy them. Some are the size of horse pills and smell like a brewery drain, and there is no point in investing in something you can't swallow.

Those who need to top up with supplements may, for example, be overweight, middle-aged men who

should add a fish oil supplement (up to 1,200mg per day) and garlic (1,000mcg) to protect against heart disease. Those who fear they are slowing down mentally may be helped by thiamine (100mcg) and boron (500mg). Zinc (25mg) can offset the effects of alcohol. Post-menopausal women and those who are fair and frail (the main risk factors for osteoporosis) need extra calcium — aim for a total intake of 1,200mg each day. Pre-menopausal women may need extra iron.

For more details about supplements, contact the Institute for Optimum Nutrition (0181-877 9993)

RITA CARTER

Have you got the guts to read it?

JAN/FEB ISSUE ON SALE NOW



مركز النخيل

...and how water and breathing exercises can keep you feeling young

THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER

At the core of a life-style for ageing is the most important nutrient of all. It is the stuff from which your blood, your cells, your muscles, even your bones, are mostly made.

Let yourself become dehydrated and the chemical reactions in the cells involved in fat-burning become sluggish. Not only that, but your cells cannot build new tissue efficiently, toxic products build up in your blood stream and your blood volume decreases so that you have less oxygen and nutrients transported to your cells.

Dehydration also results in your feeling weak and tired and can lead to overeating as it disturbs appetite mechanisms so that you think you are hungry when you are not.

Yet few of us drink as much water as we need to remain in top form. On average, in a temperate climate, when not sweating from exertion or heat, we need about six pints a day for optimal health. Few of us consume as much as two. How thirsty you are is not a

reliable indication of how much water you need.

Provided you do not suffer from a kidney or liver disease, drinking eight big glasses of water a day not only helps you to lose weight and keep it off, but it improves the functioning of your body.

It takes a bit of practice at first to make sure you get your water quota each day, but soon it will become second nature. Start by drinking two glasses of water first thing in the morning, either neat or with a twist of lemon or lime. You can heat the water if you like. This helps with elimination.

Then drink two or three glasses between breakfast and lunch, and another two or three between lunch and dinner. When you exercise, or when it is hot, drink more.

Getting the water habit will quench your appetite, improve your body's ability to eliminate wastes, heighten your energy levels, improve the look of your skin and help your metabolic processes to function at peak.

LESLIE KENTON

Obsessed with growing older? You are in good company

WRITERS AND AGEING

THE DAYS of our years are three score years and ten, says the Psalmist. But the writer hopes to use that brief span in order to live for ever. Hence the thought of advancing age always creates a tension in the literary mind. Shakespeare's dark awareness that "Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth, and delves the parallels in beauty's brow" is suffused with the dim aura of Wordsworth's "Intimations of immortality".

Young writers can afford to ignore the process of ageing, and like Keats prefer to be "half in love with love's careless Death"—which sounds more romantic and is not yet real. They are in a hurry, and dread wasting glorious youth: "In headaches and in worry / Vaguely life leaks away," wrote the young Auden, and his sense of urgency is shared by most poets and novelists in their twenties.

The fact that some really do die young only reinforces the notion that death is preferable to decrepitude, and that ageing can somehow be put off for ever. Rupert Brooke praised the young soldiers who sacrificed on the battlefield "that unloving serene, / That men call age". John Lennon, the Beatles equivalent to the war poets, sang that "life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans".

The assumption of the twentieth century was that nothing could be worse than old age is not necessarily shared by the aged themselves. Cicero thought serenity was not to be sneezed at, while Yeats mused on his Nobel Prize medal, which bore the image of a youth listening to a beautiful Muse: "I was good-looking once like that young man, but my verse was full of infirmity, my Muse old as it were; and now I am old and rheumatic, and nothing to look at, but my Muse is young." Dr Johnson, though, was in no doubt that it was better to be young and frivolous: "If I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman."

It is really only in their late thirties that most writers start to worry about the future. Perhaps the two greatest meditations on ageing in English, Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* and Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, were written not by old fogies but by men in the prime of life.

Some thirtysomethings take refuge in escapism: Housman dreams of his Shropshire lads "that will die in their glory and never be old", and "Gipsy recalls that to the grave". When Byron wrote some verses on the eve of his 37th birthday, he struck a lachrymose note: "My days are in the yellow leaf; / The flowers and fruits of love are gone; / The worm, the canker, and the grief / Are mine alone!"

For Cyril Connolly, it was fatherhood that made him feel his age (he was only 35): "There is no more sombre



Rupert Brooke praised the young soldiers of Flanders

enemy of promise than the dream in the hall."

But it is also the onset of middle age which awakens an appreciation of maturity, and especially the attractiveness of the mature woman. Shakespeare wrote the noblest pageant of all to her in *Antony and Cleopatra*: "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety." There is no better female part in all Shakespeare, yet Cleopatra is almost 40 by the time the play begins.

In what stark contrast to the maudlin self-pity of men, though, are the calm reactions of the classical women writers to ageing. As Chasterton said, the novel of the 19th century was female, and the greatest female novelists did not begin until they were past the first flush of youth: Jane Austen and George Eliot. They both contemplate the onset of middle age with equanimity. While they acknowledge the crucial importance of age in any social situation, they treat it as a fact to be reckoned with rather than as a misfortune.

Growing older ought to teach writers, like anybody else, to appreciate their elders. "When I was a boy of 14 my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around," wrote Mark Twain. "But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years."

DANIEL JOHNSON

HEALTH OFFER

Your chance to enjoy a free day at a health club and to enter our prize draw to win a year's free club membership
Page 38

Wake up to water



We should drink six pints of a water a day to stay in top form (most of us consume less than two). Water helps to eliminate waste, raises energy levels and improves the look of skin

All we need is the air that we breathe

BREATHING EXERCISES TO KEEP YOUNG

Chinese medicine has a long tradition of natural "ageless ageing", much of which centres on the use of the breath. This is something to which we give little attention in the West. It is strange to think that specific breathing techniques are ignored, given that the body's use of oxygen is the central determinant of the rate at which we age.

One of the reasons regular aerobic exercise is so beneficial in slowing the rate at which you age and at warding off degenerative diseases is that it improves your use of oxygen. So can learning to breathe fully. It can also improve your mood, increase your resistance to colds and illness, and improve your sleeping.

Full breathing is also an important tool for encouraging waste elimination — a kind of spring-cleaning process that can go on all year

round, every day of your life. Few people breathe fully. Most of us, particularly in sedentary jobs, breathe high — that is, we breathe quickly and in a shallow way, concentrating the inhalations in the upper chest area, which is the part of the lungs that holds the smallest quantity of air.

Not only does this kind of breathing inhibit oxygen intake, it can also encourage the lungs to atrophy and to lose their elasticity — a common occurrence as people get older.

Other people, who allow the air to flow deeper into their lungs, are mid-breathers. But to make the best use of oxygen for ageless ageing, it is important to develop the habit of taking total breaths so that they become a normal way of breathing.

In breathing totally, all of your breathing apparatus comes into play. The intercostal muscles expand the ribs outward to create a large space in which your lungs can inflate to their maximum. The

diaphragm moves down, pulling the lower ribs outward, which lets even the very bottom of your lungs fill completely with air.

Practise it lying down for five minutes a couple of times a day — perhaps on awakening or just before going to sleep — and gradually it will become an automatic way of breathing. Not only will this help with ageless ageing, it will also help to improve your resistance to fatigue and the glow of your skin. It will also

have some effect in protecting you from minor illness.

Here is the technique:

● Lying flat on your back with a small pillow beneath your neck, place one hand on your abdomen and rest the other on one side of your ribcage. Inhale slowly through your nose, imagining you are sending your breath to a place about two inches below your navel.

● As the in-breath continues, let it fill your stomach. Then expand your ribcage to the side, as well as the mid-section of your chest.

● Now let the fresh breath fill the upper part of your chest area. The whole process of inhalation should take about five seconds.

● Hold your breath for another five seconds to begin with, then gradually increase the time.

● Now exhale, following the same gradual process: first, contract your lower abdomen gently, then let the lower lungs deflate, followed by the upper chest. This process should also take no more than five seconds to complete.

● But note, it is important, before beginning the cycle again, to rest for a second or two.

□ Taken from *The New Ageless Ageing: The Natural Way to Stay Young*, by Leslie Kenton, published by Vermilion, an imprint of Ebury Press, £7.99.

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This will help to improve the glow of your skin

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□ How doctors make certain that a patient is dead □ Improved steroid treatment for eczema □ The mystery of restless leg syndrome

THE CASE of Mrs Daphne Banks, who was found to be alive just as she was about to be slotted into one of the freezing compartments in the local mortuary, has unfortunately given credence to a common phobia. Many patients have the unnecessary fear that they might be buried alive, later to wake in their coffins only able to hammer in vain on the lid.

It is not unknown for patients to ask their doctors to make certain that they are dead by cutting their arteries before they are buried. I recently met somebody who had made just such a request more than 30 years ago. In his case the fear had been engendered in 1957 by wide publicity given to an incident in which a 78-year-old woman had been in her coffin for eight hours, but was only noticed to be alive as the pathologist was about to begin a post mortem.

The diagnosis of death is usually straightforward. The death is expected and the end follows a familiar pattern as life ebbs away. No pulse can be felt, the heart cannot be heard, the pupils of the eyes dilate and fail to react to light, and, if the surface of the eye is touched, there is no blink response. If there is any doubt, the doctor usually listens for the heartbeat for four or five minutes

Diagnoses of death



MEDICAL BRIEFING
Dr Thomas Stuttard

until convinced that it has stopped.

The days when a mirror or feather was held in front of the mouth are gone. The fear of making a mistake is not that the patient might, Lazarus-like, arise from the dead in the grave yard, but that somebody who might have been resuscitated could be allowed to drift from unconsciousness to an unnecessary death.

I was called to a house once to see a young man who had been stung by a bee, had collapsed and apparently died. A retired nurse confirmed death, but fortunately I went immediately to examine the body and arrange for the coroner to be notified. Even as I started to mumble my con-

lences the sheet moved. The patient had suffered transient renal failure, and made a full recovery.

Diagnosing death can be difficult. A former policeman told me that when he was in the force he was taught that he should only venture an opinion in the case of apparent death when the victim had been decapitated, otherwise it should be left to the doctor.

Mistakes tend to be made in noisy surroundings where a heartbeat can be drowned by street noises, and the pulse may be hard to feel because of shock following blood loss. Intoxication with alcohol, and drug overdose, may mimic death, particularly if the patient is

also exposed to cold. Hypothermia from any cause, including near drowning, can be misleading as can unconsciousness after an electric shock.

Many years ago an elderly woman patient of mine was so obsessed about the cost of heating that she kept her home freezing cold. One winter's day I received a call from the ambulance controller to say she had been found dead on the floor of her cottage. It was too late to divert the ambulance to the casualty department, so I went to visit her in the mortuary, and noticed that she still had a heartbeat. It was a classic case of a patient, unconscious through hypothermia, being presumed dead.

In casualty the resuscitation team set to work, the patient was attached to a mass of wires and tubes. Soon the aged, cynical but very experienced and competent surgeon who was in charge of the hospital's emergency services, came to see her. It was explained that she had been taken, as dead, to the mortuary but was now alive and in his care. He examined her carefully, gave his opinion that she would have suffered irretrievable brain damage, and switched off the machinery, which by now was keeping her alive, saying: "And now she is dead again."

Skin creams up to scratch



THE Betnovate steroid creams and ointments have been an essential part of medical practice for nearly a generation. Last year Glaxo introduced Cutivate cream which is, as it were, Betnovate mark two. This month the manufacturers have extended the range by releasing Cutivate ointment for treatment of dry, scaly eczema in which some moisturisation of the skin would be useful.

Cutivate does not have to be applied quite as often as Betnovate; only once a day if the cream is used, twice a day for the ointment. In general, creams are recommended in the treatment of weeping, moist skin conditions, and ointments for those lesions which are dry and scaly, or if the area is to be covered.

Cutivate is as potent as Betnovate but is less likely to cause any side-effects if it is absorbed. It is recommended for use in cases of eczema and dermatitis but, like Betnovate, should not be pre-

scribed for acne rosacea, peri-oral dermatitis or viral skin diseases such as shingles or herpes. Nor should it be used where bacterial or fungal infection is present or when the skin trouble is in an area prone to infection. Betnovate combined with an appropriate fungicide or antibiotic is available for treating those parts of the body that might harbour organisms.

Potent steroid creams should be applied for only a few days at a time to the face because the fine skin there may atrophy and develop skin lesions as unsightly as those the cream was designed to treat.

Shaken and then stirred



THE restless leg syndrome is one of the unsolved mysteries of medicine. A 425-page treatise, *Akathisia and Restless Legs* by Perminder Sachdev, recently published by Cambridge University Press contains no explanation for the syndrome when its origins are apparently spontaneous and not

an accepted side-effect of a drug. But some people do suffer such discomfort in their legs that they are unable to keep them still, and endure, together with their partner, restless and disturbed nights.

Their symptoms can occur at any time of the day but tend to arise after they go to bed and are normally of an aching nature, although some patients complain of burning sensations and irritation. Whatever the nature of the trouble, the resulting irresistible urge to move the legs inevitably causes insomnia, which the following day leads to tiredness, irritability and a poor work performance.

Some surveys have suggested that more than 10 per cent of the population demonstrate some degree of leg restlessness; it is slightly more common in women than men. Rheumatoid arthritis, excessive coffee drinking and pregnancy are all known to make the condition worse. It is claimed that various drugs, including the calcium antagonists such as Adalat (nifedipine) provide some relief.

Levodopa, the drug used to treat Parkinson's disease, is also prescribed by some doctors but its side-effects can be worse than the disease.

The cooking fat that bypasses the hips

After 25 years of research, a food company believes it has found the perfect butter substitute, says Nigel Hawkes

A FAT that tastes like fat but doesn't leave its traces on the hips or on the heart sounds like a dream. But Procter & Gamble's Olestra, now nearing the market after a gestation of almost 25 years, raises mixed feelings among food scientists.

Unlike some fat substitutes that are based on carbohydrates or proteins, Olestra is a fat. That means its taste and "mouth-feel" are the same as a regular fat, but it carries zero calories, and is not absorbed by the body.

Normal dietary fats are mostly triglycerides — three fatty acids linked to glycerol. The molecule of Olestra is bigger, consisting of either six or eight fatty acids linked to a sugar molecule, and resists digestion by the enzymes in the stomach. That means that Olestra passes through unchanged, with no chance to clog the arteries.

Better still, says P&G, it can be used for deep-frying, producing potato crisps as good as traditional ones. Those who have tasted Olestra-fried crisps agree that they are good, though there is a slight aftertaste.

The effect of frying in Olestra is to reduce the calorie count of an ounce of crisps from 150 to 60. A slice of pie in Olestra pastry would come down from 405 calories to 250, while a helping of chocolate cake would go down from 230 calories to 160. This could help slimmers, but there are caveats. Wouldn't they simply satisfy a fat craving by eating other things?

Olestra's opponents in America, orchestrated by Ralph Nader's Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CPSI), have focused attention below the belt. Because the molecules of Olestra move unchanged through the stomach, they can act as solvents, removing other nutrients from the body.

Vitamins A, D, E and K and beta-carotene are all fat-soluble, and trials have shown that they can be stripped from the body by eating Olestra. P&G says that it has solved this problem by adding extra vitamins to Olestra-based foods, saturating the molecule's appetite so that it no longer absorbs additional vitamins. But they have not done the same with carotenoids.

A second problem is that Olestra-based foods can cause laxative effects or even, in the killer phrase latched on to by CPSI, "anal leakage". This has been cured for almost all consumers by tinkering with the molecular structure to make the product more viscous. But how many people will be willing to take even the smallest chance of embarrassing accidents?

At the hearings before the US Food and Drug Administration, CPSI's executive director, Michael Jacobson, painted a ghastly picture of a young athlete subjected to taunts in the locker-room as a result of stains on his boxer shorts. This is not especially tasteful stuff, but when Mr Nader's raiders identify an issue, they fight dirty — in this case, literally.

There have been plenty of arguments before about food constituents,



Fat-free snacks: low-calorie chips may become a reality if Procter & Gamble get the go-ahead to sell Olestra

but this one is different in at least one respect. While additives, colourants or antioxidants are present only in small amounts, fat is a macronutrient, making up a substantial proportion of the food. The classic example of such a major dietary change was the introduction of margarine to replace butter earlier this century.

Some nutritionists now wonder if the trans-fats in margarine did not do as much harm as the saturated fats in butter they replaced. One of them is Walter Willett, professor of nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health, who now opposes Olestra. What will happen to consumers who eat it daily for years, he asks? He has described it as "appalling" to propose giving a food to children on the basis of tests largely carried out on pigs.

One unanswered question is whether eating foods made with Olestra will

reduce fat and calorie intakes, or simply encourage people to eat more to make up for what they are missing. According to Dr David Mela of the Institute of Food Research at Reading, relatively few studies have addressed the problem. He suspects that as far as calories are concerned, people will compensate by eating more, and the same may also be true of fat.

The artificial sweetener NutraSweet was supposed to reduce obesity by cutting calories. But people who use it also eat something else to compensate: obesity rates have since increased.

"Fat-substituted foods probably should not be relied upon to produce spontaneous improvements in fat intake, body-weight management or obesity," concludes Dr Mela. "But they might help some individuals as part of an overall, wilful effort to control diet."

It is now up to the FDA commission-

er, David Kessler, to rule on P&G's application to use Olestra in snacks and crisps. He will decide, not on the basis of whether Olestra makes nutritional sense, but whether it is safe. As American law stands, he will probably have little choice but to give it clearance in the limited market for which the application has been made.

In Britain, P&G applied for permission for the same applications to the Ministry of Agriculture's Food Advisory Committee in 1987, and is still waiting for an answer. From time to time the FAC seeks clarification on various points, and P&G supplies it — but if and when Olestra will be approved is anyone's guess.

The irony is that Olestra is opposed by the very people who have campaigned for years to reduce saturated fat in foods. To their critics, whatever the food companies do is wrong.

Take two spiders and call me in the morning

Magnus Linklater on ancient Highland remedies

E ye of newt, and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog: Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting, Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing... A recipe for horror or just a medical shopping-list? The witch's brew from Macbeth contains just a few of the ingredients which crop up time and again in old country remedies; some of them have genuine medicinal properties, others form part of traditional healing rituals. But given a trial period of several centuries, it is not surprising that many of them have stood the test of time.

Mary Beith, a writer and journalist who lives in Sutherland in the north of Scotland, has spent the past ten years collecting traditional medicines of the Highlands and Islands. She has found a surprising number used within living memory, and some with remarkable healing properties, which, she believes, merit scientific analysis rather than simply being written off as "old wives' tales".

She has not sampled a newt's eye, but she has found prescriptions involving adders' heads, frogs' skins, dog's saliva, and, if not an owl's wing, then certainly a gannet's chick or the oil of a fulmar. Once, nursing a cut finger, she drew it across a spider's web and found the bleeding miraculously stopped; going to bed with a boiled onion in each armpit did little for her personal hygiene, but it cured a nasty bout of bronchial asthma overnight; and though she has not yet plucked up the courage to swallow a large garden spider, she is in no doubt that it has properties which can help to limit the effects of a stroke.

"I don't think I would advise people to try all of these cures at home, but I have no doubt that a lot of the old remedies deserve a proper reappraisal," she says. The adder's fork and the blind-worm's sting from Macbeth are common sense antidotes to snakebite; a frog, sliced in two, was said to cure drowsy; the gannet and the fulmar were so useful to the Hebrideans that they were described as "flying medicine chests".

Ms Beith's book, *Healing Threads*, traces the origins of folk tales and superstitions, and finds a logical explanation behind many. She is convinced that the Gaelic healers in particular drew on a body of medical knowledge which has never been properly collated, and she has found fascinating clinical observations by early travellers which show that what might seem plain superstition to us, was often founded on sound medical practice.

"To understand and do justice to their approach to medicine, we must meet them half

way," she says. "A lot of the early Gaelic manuscripts show that doctors were listening to their patients rather than just dictating to them. They had a concept of illness which was different from ours. The Gaelic for 'I'm sick' is 'I have a sickness on me'. By this definition, the pain doesn't belong to the patient, and it can be made to go away."

How a patient was suffering seems to have been more important than finding a clinical definition of the illness. Ms Beith is not, however, under any illusion about the value of what she has found. "Many of the cures are rooted

today when faith in a particular doctor can be every bit as important as the pills he or she prescribes.

A favourite Celtic remedy for lung disease was a carrot poultice, made out of crushed wild carrots, heated, mixed with oatmeal, then applied to the chest. Wild carrot does indeed have medicinal properties, but it could never of itself reverse a cancerous growth. Applied by a confident healer, however, able to convince his patients that they were on the road to recovery, the remedy might achieve a miracle.

Certain plants, animals and insects were plainly of more use than others, and Ms Beith has not only sought them out, she has tried many herself. Eyebright, the aptly-named plant which has long been effective as a soothing eye-wash, can, she found, if simmered in milk, drained off and drunk, be of long-term help in curing redness and soreness round the eyes.

Thyme, one of the most potent of tonics, known as "the king's herb" in Gaelic, was prescribed for nerves and weak chests, and was once popular as an everyday beverage. She found it was a very effective sleeping draught when brewed up like tea. "It's pretty good," she admits, "but effective."

Perhaps most interesting were the plants commonly used to heal wounds or bruising. Kidney vetch, primrose leaves, bogbean, and especially ribwort plantain, stopped bleeding when applied to cuts, and rapidly led to the forming of a second skin. It was while

Ms Beith was in Mull that she also discovered the healing properties of the spider's web. "I had caught my finger on the snib of a gate," she says, "and the bleeding wouldn't stop. I went into a byre draped with cobwebs, drew my hand across a spider's web, and the bleeding stopped."

She also thinks that there might be something in the old belief that swallowing a large garden spider gives relief in the aftermath of a stroke. "The main damage is caused by the body over-producing glutamates," she says. "Spider venom counteracts this. It has certain properties that stop spasms. It has to be alive, because then it goes down the throat spitting venom. A friend from Shetland told me that up there they cover the spider with butter first. It makes it easier to swallow."

Perhaps, once again, Shakespeare knew something about this. In Richard III, Queen Margaret, Henry VI's widow, asks Elizabeth: "Why strew'st thou sugar on that bottled spider?"

Healing Threads by Mary Beith is published by Polygon (£9.99).



Mary Beith: testing ancient cures

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Darling baba, all love Larry

MICHAEL POWELL

The ink is fading on the scrap of paper, the handwriting almost illegible. "My darling," it reads. "Here's your thesaurus (sic). You see I was listening all those times you mentioned it! Happy birthday."

Vivien Leigh scribbled this to her husband Laurence Olivier, on one unspecified birthday. It is a poignant fragment from the happy moments in a marriage that was soon to descend into madness and tragedy.

It was a trivial note, but Lord Olivier could not bear to throw it away. A compulsively organised man, he kept everything from steamboat tickets to love letters. In the loft of his home in Steyning, West Sussex, dozens of suitcases are bulging with yellowing missives and neatly-kept engagement diaries, full of entries such as: 22 July 1951: lunch: Judy Garland and daughter, Orson Welles, Peter Finch, Ralph Richardson, Humphrey Bogart.

In a nearby barn, in crates crawling with silverfish, there are letters from such luminaries as David Niven, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Peggy Ashcroft, Richard Attenborough, Noel Coward and Christopher Fry.

Olivier's letters to his friends began either "Darling baba" or "Darling boyie". He signed them "all love, Larry".

The task of piecing these documents together has gone to Derek Granger, a former theatre critic and the producer of the television adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*, in which Olivier played his swansong role as Lord Marchmain.

Granger was a close friend of the actor and now the Olivier family, who have been stung by the allegations in Donald Spoto's unauthorised biography, has chosen him to write the first official biography, which is expected to be published at the end of next year.

"I must say, I do sometimes feel a frisson of guilt when I am reading Larry's private correspondence," says Granger. "I am not sure I would like him to read mine."

Granger is sitting on the floor of Olivier's bedroom. His lordship's widow, Joan Plowright, is in Tenerife, his daughter Tamsin is downstairs in the kitchen. Picture windows look out on to the large but housing the swimming pool, the tennis courts and the garden surrounded by thick hedges. "He was very keen on topiaries and had a rather disastrous attempt at cutting Chekhov's Three Sisters," says Granger.

This was a typical piece of behaviour from a man who wanted to be the best at everything. "I have never known anyone who had such an extraordinary aptitude for work," says Granger. "He always made one feel hopeless — as if one didn't do enough."

Granger was a schoolboy in 1937 when he saw Olivier perform his legendary Hamlet. They became friends in the 1950s. "From a very early age, Larry wanted to be in control. When he founded the National Theatre, he was absolutely the leader of the company. He even took it upon himself to reorganise the stage-door man's leaving party; we have the letters he

For the first time, Lord Olivier's biographer reveals the private letters of a theatrical genius, by Julia Llewellyn Smith



Olivier as Lord Marchmain.

sent to every member of the company.

"He was not only a director there, but also an actor and also the manager. If you look at his diaries you see he spent the day organising schedules and talking budgets and then, at 7pm, getting into makeup and getting onto the stage."

"But during the day he would always find time to do some exercise, have a meal and a nap. He dreaded playing Othello because it was so exhausting. He loved drinking, especially his whisky, but he always gave up when he was training for a part. We have a touching letter to Anthony Quayle saying he has forewarned all earthly pleasures for the duration of a season at the National."

He never let up. On one day in 1955, he wrapped the filming of *Richard III* and went straight to Stratford to play Malvolio, Titus Andronicus and Macbeth. The next morning he got up to go to a local cinema to inspect the rushes.

This energy and conscientiousness were Olivier's greatest gifts. They could also be his worst flaw. "He was as territorial as a tiger," says Granger. "Once when I was working with him at Granada, he became more and more idly indifferent towards me. I couldn't understand why until someone said: 'He's jealous of you because you know the whole business of studios and scheduling. He can't understand why people were coming to you and not to him.'"

In old age he would get terribly

attention. He would sit with his family and demand: "What are they talking about at the end of the table? But how can you be the greatest actor in the world and not want attention?"

Olivier had total belief in himself and was intolerant of criticism or interference. "After he had seen the first cut of *Brideshead*, he invited me to dinner and blasted me because we had cut 30 seconds from his deathbed speech. We thought he would never notice. He bellowed: 'I only took the role because of that speech!' By the end of dinner, I had rung Granada and begged them to reinstate those lines. It cost a fortune to put them back, but in retrospect I realised he was right."

He was also cross because he decided that John Gielgud had a better part as Mr Ryder. "You have given Johnny the best part," he complained. We said: "But only you could play Lord Marchmain, because he was so glamorous."

Fools were not suffered gladly. "We have one letter from a member of the National complaining that Larry had hit him in the shoulderblades, while they were standing in the wings and said 'Go out there and get more laughs!' I was practically sick on the stage," he writes. "Another letter from Olivier berates the Rank organisation, who prudishly wanted to cut the 'blasphemous' 'Cry God for Harry' from *Henry V*. Larry soon put paid to that idea," chuckles Granger.

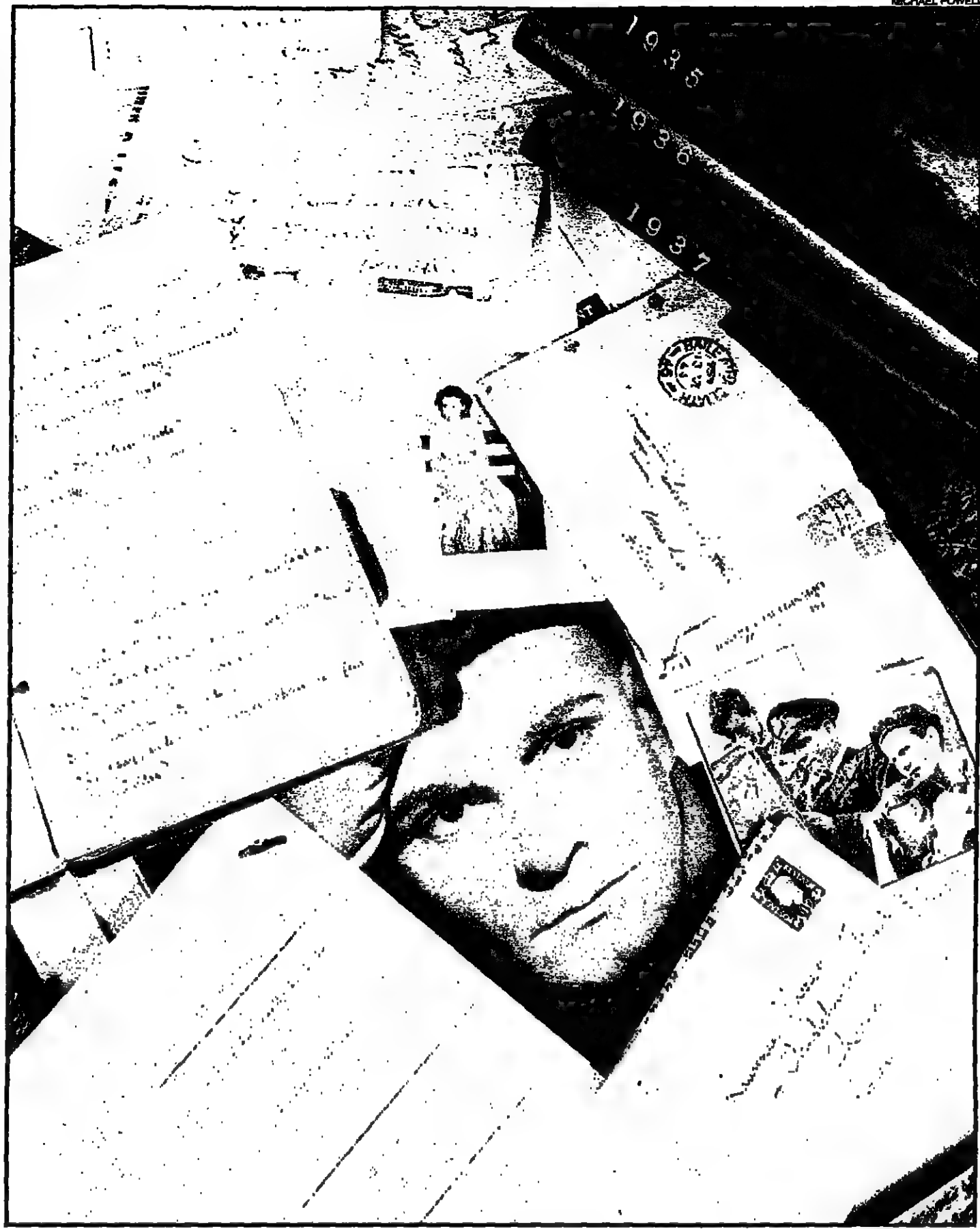
Yet this tyranny was laced with an extraordinarily sweet nature. "He was enormously aggressive in the pursuit of his career, and yet so thoughtful in other ways. All the birthdays of his family are listed in his diary and every single cricket match and event of his children."

"He was a clergyman's son, ingrained from childhood with a sense of duty. Financially, he took care of his nepotism and siblings."

Olivier replied patiently to every fan letter. "We have letters to schoolboys telling them how to play Macbeth and another letter to a training college in Staffordshire, which wanted advice on putting on *Hamlet*. He advises performing it in its entirety and says: 'It's simply a play about a man who cannot make up his mind. Don't worry too much about why he can't, he just can't and you must feel that he can't.' He then apologises for not being able to lend any of the National's props."

In another letter to his third wife, Joan Plowright, he writes, "You have an absolutely marvellously uncalculated impish humour which is laced with an aptitude for self mockery. This last can be an invaluable but also a dangerous quality, which should be used judiciously. The first is priceless but must not always be relied upon because it will not always get you out of a hole... Acting is basically a humourless task and that's what makes people like us suffer so. Your back is straight and beautiful," he writes in the same letter. "Christ, those corsets in this weather."

I hope these letters will scotch Olivier's reputation as a bit of an



The face of the young Olivier stares from a collection of his memorabilia, including letters from his father and Vivien Leigh

intellectual dumbo," says Granger. "There is a marvellous urgency and cogency to them, which many writers might envy."

Granger also hopes that the letters will show that Olivier, while a megalomaniac, was still keen to encourage his contemporaries' talents. "He was always writing to Gielgud, Scofield and Redgrave, offering them top roles. He would never play *Falstaff* or *Cyrano*

because he felt they were best done by Richardson." And he could laugh at himself. "I remember him in the swimming pool when he was withered and ill and he flung his arms in the air and cried 'Look at the sex symbol of the western world!'"

Granger can throw less light on Olivier's love life, knowing nothing about the affair claimed by Sarah Miles. Of his relationship with

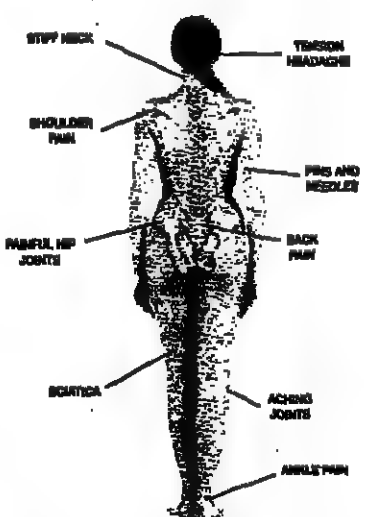
Leigh, he says: "It was a very traumatic and draining time. I think if he had not met Joan and fallen in love again, he couldn't have founded the National. Had he stayed married to Vivien, he would have had a very diminished career."

Instead, Olivier went on to forge an even more dazzling career. "There never will be another one like him," says Granger. "Not only

because he was such a great actor, but because he was born at the end of an extraordinary tradition where leading actors were expected to play all the great classical parts. Sure, there are the Tony Hopkins, the Branaghs, but they disappear to Hollywood. There will never be a period when commercial theatres can also afford to put on Shakespeare and attract such dazzling names."

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No longer a man's world

It seems that the old fashioned gents of the Oxford and Cambridge University Club are now attached to tradition only by their fingertips. Uncivilised opposition to the idea of allowing "lady associates" members has dwindled to an embattled gang of 324 out of a full male membership of some 3,000 (the 500 ladies do not, of course, have a vote). But a ballot expected this month is almost certain to bring victory to the pro-change faction, allowing women entry to the inner sanctums of the club for the first time.

The mystery is that the ants have managed to fend off change for so long. A club ballot in 1993 showed a 3-1 majority in favour of equal rights, but it was rendered void because the turnout was just short of the required 50 per cent. Sixty-nine college heads have since resigned, along with scores of others, and membership is dropping.

But now that admission rules can be changed by a straight two-thirds majority, the club should be able to sneak into the 20th century just in time.

The stalwarts still opposed to change should not be surprised that they are referred to in the hushed tones of bemused curiosity reserved for endangered animals. Their blustering defiance concerns issues of impotence, disgraceful intrusion and various constitutional verities, and is



Joanna Pitman invades the male-only inner sanctum of the Oxford and Cambridge University Club

accompanied by remarks such as "I want to drink in peace. I don't wish to be surrounded by headmistresses and female dons. I do wish women did not try to run everything. They should restrict that to their families and homes."

The most stubborn and unclimbable may end up resigning. But some have already softened their stance. "The winds of change are blowing and we're going to have to think again," Sir Peter Crill says. "There may be a condition that there are two rooms set aside for members to retreat to — a men's bar and a ladies drawing room."

Heralded by a graceful Pall Mall façade, the club envelopes the visitor with a cherished sense of Establishment. There are formal reception rooms, lofty ceilings hung with chandeliers, the old hunting trophy and a selection of colonel-types gathered happily around fireplaces with their mens murmuring "quite" at each other over postprandial coffees.

But ladies are steered firmly away from the marble staircase which sweeps up from the

reception under yards of Tory blue carpeting. It is said that they are only allowed up as far as the penultimate stair, for to go further would take them to the second-floor male sanctum, the home of the club's library and smoking room.

Could it be that the 324 ants believe that women would damage or infect the books? Are they worried about the oestrogen count or the decaying action of sweaty fingers (an old Japanese excuse for preventing women from becoming sushi makers)?

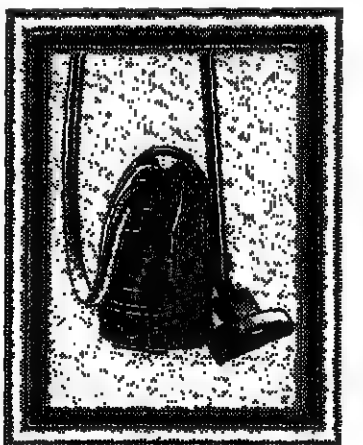
Risking life and limb, and having already witnessed two men trespassing unaccompanied in the ladies drawing room, I stepped out of the ladies lift and invaded the library by a few feet, braced for a volcanic run-in, or at the very least a couple of stick pokings and a squirt from a fountain pen.

Three young gents were sitting reading, wearing perma-frost expressions and Savile Row-ish suits, while a squire in noisy tweeds was browsing the shelves. My arrival elicited a couple of harrumphs and one stern gaze over a pair of half-moon spectacles. Then an elderly fellow shuffled forward. We exchanged tense salutations until he finally confessed, with great delicacy, that I was trespassing. He said he took a dim view of this insanity but remained to avail himself of the facilities and, most importantly, to facilitate swift improvement. May he succeed.

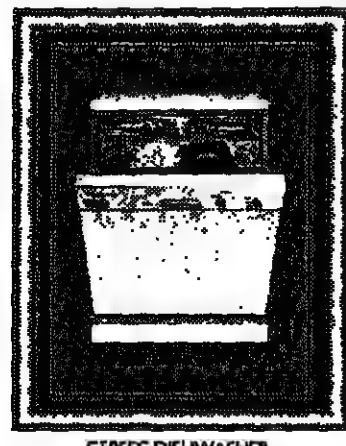
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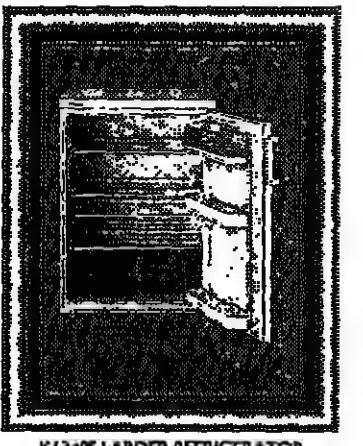
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Why Blair is no heir to Thatcher

David Willetts says Labour's real stakeholders would be the unions

Margaret Thatcher's speech tonight is a lecture in memory of Keith Joseph. That simple fact may be the event's most important political message. Keith Joseph showed that ideas matter in politics. The reason the Tory party has won elections is that it has won arguments. The ideas which Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph developed after they set up the Centre for Policy Studies in 1975 are as relevant now as they were then. Freedom, enterprise and ownership remain the Tories' big idea.

The market economy is ceasing to be the exclusive inheritance of a few Western countries and is increasingly enjoyed across the world. That is the challenge which John Major asks us to face. It is why we must make Britain the enterprise centre of Europe.

Labour's problem is very simple: it does not have a Keith Joseph. Its gurus are not thinkers but spin-doctors. They trade not in ideas but in sound-bites. They have not succeeded in working out a significant new left-of-centre alternative to modern Conservatism, and perhaps they never will.

We are told now that they have a big new idea, the stakeholder. But that idea has a history. The language of stakeholders was developed by thinkers on the Left who didn't like what we Tories did in the 1980s. It does not venture into an exciting new territory beyond modern Conservatism. It is an idea from European social democracy circa 1980: the sort of thing that Sweden, France and Germany are now beginning to abandon, but which counts as modern in today's Labour Party.

Big government is still the true enemy

Instead of real property rights, which give people genuine freedom and independence, stakeholding advocates legislative intervention by politicians. Shareholders' rights are thought to be somewhat rather old-fashioned and backward-looking. Labour's proposed windfall tax on the utilities rests on this view of the world: it is a direct attack on the value of shares held by millions of small investors.

Of course any well-run business is going to want to look after its customers and its workforce as well as its shareholders. But we must let companies be as free as possible to work out their own way of satisfying these stakeholders. When the term is taken over as part of a political programme, it has a very different meaning. The idea is that companies must be forced to achieve social objectives for the community, as specified by politicians. This is where the European social chapter and the minimum wage fit in. The combined effect of these two policies is to produce youth unemployment of 26 per cent in France and 44 per cent in Spain.

Labour's approach to policy has always been to try to appeal to every interest group. The traditional way of doing so has been through higher public expenditure, and the party certainly hasn't abandoned

its instinctive belief that every problem can be solved by "more resources". But it has found a second way of appealing to interest groups: by telling them they can be stakeholders. This has the advantage that the economic cost doesn't count as part of public expenditure: government can simply impose a new obligation on businesses to do what it wants them to.

This is taxation by the back door, and just as economically damaging as conventional taxation, though more easily disguised from the electorate. But businessmen can feel it. For every £100 spent on wages, an employer in Britain has to add an extra £18 for non-wage costs. In Germany, an employer would have to add £32; in Spain, £34; and in France, £41. That's where the rhetoric about stakeholders would take us.

Governments would face a new set of claims for favours, in the guise of bids to become recognised as stakeholders. Whose stakes would be protected by a Cabinet in which every single member was sponsored by a trade union? John Prescott and Margaret Beckett want to get rid of all trade union legislation. Who are they to regard as the true stakeholders in British industry? What does Glenda Jackson's campaign against rail privatisation, backed by the rail unions, tell us about who she regards as the main stakeholders in the railways?

These are the old vested interests, dressed up in the latest language of corporate strategy. If I were running a successful firm, trying to take account of the interests of employees, customers and shareholders, I would be terrified about a Labour government taking the language of stakeholders and using it for its own purposes.

Now Tony Blair has the gall to call this a commitment to "One Nation". True One Nation Conservatism — that of Angus Maude and Enoch Powell, as well as Ian Macleod and Reginald Maudling — was a recognition that the only way to sustain one nation was not to have governments picking and choosing between conflicting claims on resources. That just ends up as a Hobbesian war of all against all, fought through the political process.

In a pamphlet, these Conservatives wrote: "Economic change is the normal environment in which nations live, and successful adjustment to it is a condition of their wellbeing. In six years of war and six of socialism, this important truth was dangerously obscured and overfaded." They saw that intrusive government was a threat to both prosperity and social cohesion. That remains true, even if believers in big government now dress it up in the language of the stakeholder.

David Willetts MP is Parliamentary Secretary at the Office of Public Service. He was director of the Centre for Policy Studies, 1987-92.



Not Granada's Forte

Gerry Robinson's bid for the hotel chain would create an unwieldy group

In the late 1980s I was chairman of the publishers Sidgwick & Jackson, which was then owned by Forte. My experience was that Forte was a very well run company, with a deep hotel culture in the family and the management. Because I enjoyed working with them, I have a natural prejudice in their favour. I have, however, a much stronger reason for being uneasy about the Granada bid.

I have come to have a complete distrust for the modern bid culture of the City. It is far too much driven by exorbitant fees which enrich banks and brokers at the expense of shareholders. It is more concerned with financial engineering than industrial logic. It imposes short-term views on British business. It is strongly influenced by personal vanity. It is most characteristic product has been the unwieldy and illogical conglomerate, usually with high debt: the investment performance of these companies has been disappointing.

The Granada bid for Forte is a characteristic example of this bid culture. As "Lex" said in yesterday's *Financial Times*: "Granada's fight for Forte carries a whiff of the asset-stripping 1980s." The fees are already enormous, and by the time Granada has made its proposed £2 billion of asset sales, the fees will be much, much larger. The whole of the industrial case has already been changed in the course of the bid. In its first offer of November 24, Granada promised to "capitalise decisively on the Meridian brand". In the second offer, of January 9, Granada promised to sell Meridian. An industrial logic which was seriously intended would not have been turned on its head in the course of six weeks.

Personal vanity has been noticeable in some of Gerry Robinson's statements to the press. He is touted as some sort of miracle manager. In the past 40 years I have seen only too many miracle managers come and go. There are indeed good and bad managers, and there are good managers who seize an opportunity, or hit a lucky streak. But the great majority of miracle managers cannot sustain the miraculous performance.

In its second offer, Granada boasts about its management skills, in terms which would be laughable if they were not taken seriously in the City. "Granada's strategy is firmly based on two parallel themes which are at the heart of the Group's success — Focus and Breadth." Apart from the

opacity and confusion of the metaphors, this seems to be a contradiction in terms. To focus means to concentrate the attention, *breadth* means spreading out. Granada is like a supermodel saying that her career "is based on two parallel themes which are at the heart of my success — Thinness and Fatness".

I discussed his concept of focusing with Mr Robinson over the telephone. He explained that one can focus managerial attention on different parts of a diverse business. That is what I have been hearing managers of conglomerates say for 40 years.

Most of them have long since retired. So have some of the conglomerates. If Granada's bid is successful, it will take a deep bath of debt. Before the assets sales can be started, the debt will rise to between £3 billion and £4 billion, resting on businesses which have considerable exposure to recession. Granada was originally successful as a television business. It now covers television, including an investment in BSkyB, rental and catering. It proposes to extend into hotels. The offer documents explain that this gives "breadth across a range of related core businesses, to minimise risks to shareholders from a downturn in any core market". This again is nonsense. The proposed core businesses are not related, but random. There is no logical connection between catering and television rentals, or between hotels and an investment in BSkyB. The one possible connection is that most of these businesses could be hit by a recession at the same time. Hotel occupancy rates, hotel asset values and advertising sales all suffered together in the last recession.

The Forte proposal, by contrast, is what Sir James Goldsmith called "unbundling". It would leave a relatively well defined hotel group, would help Whitebreads to develop a similarly defined catering group, and would leave Granada to run its existing businesses. The proposed Forte disposals do therefore have a management logic. Granada spends

its time claiming to be the better manager, but the management logic of its proposal is much weaker. It would bundle everything up, take on a vast load of debt, and then sell off half the Forte assets it had bought, pay off some of the debt and still be left with a mish-mash of assets to manage. Even its own supporters envisage an eventual Granada unbundling to separate television and catering, perhaps in 18 months time. This is an extraordinarily roundabout way of restructuring Granada, which would involve high fees at every stage.

The post-war history of the bid culture is not reassuring. The classic case was Siegmund Warburg's brilliant campaign in 1958 to buy British Aluminium. The bankers Herbert Wagg were Reynolds Metals. Michael Verity of Herbert Wagg has commented: "It didn't emerge for years that the fight was a very expensive one for the client. In fact Siegmund gave Reynolds poor advice. British Aluminium was not worth it at that price." That bid helped to make Warburg's leading merchant bank in London: in bid battles, what is good for the banker is not necessarily good for the client.

There is always risk in what Granada is proposing, taking on an enormous debt with a view to future asset sales. In 1988, I remember meeting Robert Maxwell at a reception. He had just bought the American Macmillan. I said that people thought he had paid too much. He looked rather sheepish, unusually for him, but said he would sell this asset at low costs. "You know me: I never pay too much." In the event the recession came on before he could make the sales. That was the deal which finished him. More or less the same thing happened to Jim Slater, an exceptionally intelligent financier. He knew that he had to get back into

William Rees-Mogg

advertising Sir Michael Tippett's opera, *The Midsummer Marriage*, because it features bare bottoms. Henceforth, the posterior view of a nude couple holding hands will be more modest. Keith Cooper, the director of corporate affairs, denies that there were objections to bare buttocks, but says, "It is hard to get the image right, and when we consulted with the director and the designer, we decided to change it."

As the Oscar season reels round again, the Academy has declared that studios must no longer bombard voters with expensive keepsakes to try to influence decisions. But the bar does not stretch to videotapes of films, and the marketing men have been working overtime. Tapes of Tim Robbins's flick about death row, *Dead Man Walking*, arrive in coffins.

Just him

GOBSTOPPERS all round. The Just William Society has unearthed the young boy who played William in two films based on Richard Crompton's books, made just after the war.

Eddie Graham, now a 64-year-old grandfather, responded to a nationwide call by the society from behind his sweet counter at the shop in Taplow that he manages.

cash in 1973, but found that the 1974 recession had overtaken him. He had to sell the assets he would have liked to keep, because they were the only assets that could be sold. Slater Walker was kaput.

I do not think we are in that stage of the cycle now, or that the next recession is particularly likely to catch out Mr Robinson. On the other hand, Siegmund Warburg paid too much, Robert Maxwell was ruined, and Jim Slater got his timing wrong. Trafalgar House has not been a very good investment recently. Highly geared conglomerates often work well enough at the beginning, and go to a premium, but they usually end in tears, and go to a discount. Mr Robinson should remember three long-established principles. There is always an opportunity cost in debt exposure. There is always a time-lag between the decision to sell and the actual realisation of sales. And there is always a risk the market will turn before the sales can be made.

The City of London is a great institution, but it has one great weakness of character. It is always looking for easy money. Lloyd's names thought they had found a way to make easy money; they found out they were wrong. Barings thought it had a money-machine in Singapore; it found out it was wrong. Since the 1950s, the City has repeatedly found easy money in corporate finance, often involving the creation of speculative conglomerates, with the recurrent exposure to excessive debt. Some of these have crashed, some have limped along, only a few have been highly profitable in the longer term. There has been no penalty for the bankers or brokers who promoted them, but their managers have usually had meteoric careers ending in splashdown, and their investors, including institutional investors, have often come to regret their enthusiasm.

The City has a very short memory: it fails to balance yesterday's disasters against tomorrow's fees. Perhaps Mr Robinson really is the star manager of his generation, but probably not. He would not be making such a muddled bid if he really were that good. I agree with what he is quoted as saying in *Ruth Tait's Roads to the Top*: "I have a simple belief that if you get to the stage where you are panicking and think that you have to acquire something to achieve growth, you're in deep trouble because you make silly acquisitions."

Russia's ancient enemy

Thomas de Waal on Yeltsin and the Chechens

Just over 150 years ago, in September 1845, the British Consul to Odessa, James Yeames, wrote a long report on the latest offensive in Chechnia. "No previous expedition into the same country was ever more disastrous, by loss of life and more entirely fruitless in its results," he wrote, adding that Count Mikhail Vorontsov, a general who had successfully fought Napoleon, was now bogged down against the Chechens.

Plus ça change. In 1996, the Chechen conflict seems to have turned into one of those wars in which everyone loses. The Russians are as stuck in Chechnia as they were 150 years ago in Afghanistan, with the unpleasant difference that it is supposed to be part of their own territory. Most ordinary Chechens are heartily sick of the Russians and want them out.

Tuesday's raid on Kizlyar is a sign that the rebels can still, at a stroke, take the war to enemy territory with the kind of action which will never win them the war, but will give President Yeltsin sleepless nights.

The Kizlyar raid is the grandson of an old Chechen tactic. The Chechens, the most daring horsemen of the Caucasus and the most famous cattle-rustlers, were famous in tsarist times for their lightning raids, known as *nabegi*. A 19th-century chronicler of the Caucasus, Sergei Bronzovskiy, describes how a group of 20 horsemen would swim across the River Terek, hide among the boulders and then leap out on unsuspecting locals and take them hostage. "They are so possessed with ferocity that they spare no one," he wrote.

The Russians built the fortress of Kizlyar on the banks of the Terek in 1735, and it has been a target for *nabegi* ever since. Alexandre Dumas began his travels through the Caucasus in 1858 there, and his description of the town would strike chords with any visitor to Chechnia today. He stayed in an unimproved house (the chief of police later sent round some furniture on a cart) and the 15-year-old boy who welcomed him wore a gun and dagger in his belt. His seven-year-old sister had a dagger as tall as himself.

Chechnia today is just as tense and divided as it was in Dumas's time. The Russians have control of Grozny and the oil pipeline, and have installed a friendly Government in the republic. But Grozny is in ruins, and much of the population is still living in cellars and basements and in fear of the bullets of drunken Russian soldiers.

The rebel Chechens, under the old President, Dzhokhar Dudayev, are still at large in the hills, and more than a year after 40,000 troops were sent to finish them off, they are still resisting. Last autumn I took tea with General Dudayev's Vice-President in a house only a mile from a Russian checkpoint. The separatists may be fighting on, but they will have to face the fact that they have lost their capital and two-thirds of the republic.

The hostility between Chechen fighters and Russian soldiers is probably as intense now as it was in the 1850s. This is a clash of two almost irreconcilable cultures, that of the Slav Russians and that of the mountain Chechens, who have never accepted Russian rule.

But it would also be a mistake to romanticise the Chechen rebel leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev, and the men who carried out the Kizlyar raid. Rather than romantic heroes, they are players in a dirty post-Soviet game. In their hands, the Chechen cause has become a long feast of violence.

General Dudayev spent his career in the Soviet army, and did not even live in Chechnia until he returned to be elected President. He promised the Chechens a miracle-like "independence" that was never economically practicable, and yet kept up links with Russian officials and friends in the old Soviet army, giving them a cut of Chechnia's black market wealth. After last July's ceasefire, the general had a very good opportunity to sign a political agreement with the Russians, but he refused.

The raids on Budennovsk and Kizlyar — when the fighters began by attacking military bases and ended up using hospital patients and children as human shields — show how debased the myth of Chechen gallantry has become. But if for the rebel Chechens even a defeat carries a kind of glory, the real loser of this war is Boris Yeltsin. Even Russian officials are now putting the civilian death count at 20,000. Yeltsin cuts a poor figure as the defender of Russia's interests, because it is clear that he had many other options when he chose to send in troops in December 1994. The whole episode smelt sharply of political adventurism.

Yeltsin has called the Chechen war "the biggest disappointment" of his presidency. It may well turn out to be its death blow. Whether he seeks peace or escalates the war, the bloodshed will continue. Boris Yeltsin, the man who defeated Communism, had probably never heard of the Chechen quagmire that stopped Count Vorontsov, the man who helped vanquish Napoleon. If only he had read his history books.

Firm friend

THE QUEEN is losing one of her most loyal servants. Today, the Rev Keith Angus, her domestic chaplain in Scotland, announces his retirement at the worthy age of 66, after 17 years at Crathie Parish Church on Royal Deeside.

The reverend refuses to talk about his lengthy association with

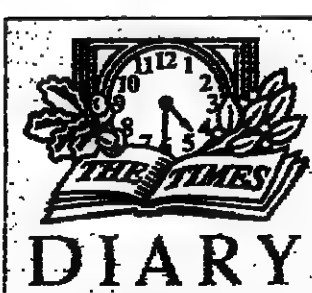
the Royal Family — Crathie is Balmoral's local church. But the height of his involvement came when he officiated at the wedding of the Princess Royal to Commander Tim Laurence.

Mr Angus says that he will miss ministering to his parishes of Braemar and Crathie, their combined population of 600 and 400 square miles of the most spectacular scenery in the British Isles. Only a few years ago, he was to be found on Saturdays hunting and shooting in the hills in his gaiters. "I don't do that any more," he says. "I can't manage the hills any more."

In retirement, at least, he will no longer be harassed by the press. "I have been beleaguered by everybody," he explains. "But I never speak about the Royal Family."

The sole nominee to succeed him — in a post which involves regular summer barbecues with the Royal Family — is the Rev Robert Sloan from Perth, who will preach this Sunday at Crathie, the hilltop church overlooking Balmoral.

● The Prime Minister wasn't pulling any electoral punches at his breakfast for businessmen yesterday at the Hyde Park Hotel. "One thing I have in common with Tony Blair," he joshed, "— I don't invite John Prescott to meetings either."



day at the Hyde Park Hotel. "One thing I have in common with Tony Blair," he joshed, "— I don't invite John Prescott to meetings either."

Pink blues

DOMESTIC problems face Her Benign Pinkness, Dame Barbara Cartland. Her housekeeper is retiring at the age of 84, and the situation has become vacant. Prospective employees must enjoy bar colour schemes and her Pekinises.

"My housekeeper has been given doctor's orders to retire," says Dame Barbara, "but I have got advertisements for a replacement in all the local papers."

Bottoms down

THE Royal Opera House has been a little too risque for its own good. It has withdrawn a marketing card

advertising Sir Michael Tippett's opera, *The Midsummer Marriage*, because it features bare bottoms. Henceforth, the posterior view of a nude couple holding hands will be more modest. Keith Cooper, the director of corporate affairs, denies that there were objections to bare buttocks, but says, "It is hard to get the image right, and when we consulted with the director and the designer, we decided to change it."

As the Oscar season reels round again, the Academy has declared that studios must no longer bombard voters with expensive keepsakes to try to influence decisions. But the bar does not stretch to videotapes of films, and the marketing men have been working overtime. Tapes of Tim Robbins's flick about death row, *Dead Man Walking*, arrive in coffins.



Angus retiring after many years of discretion

"It's never worried anyone in the Government"

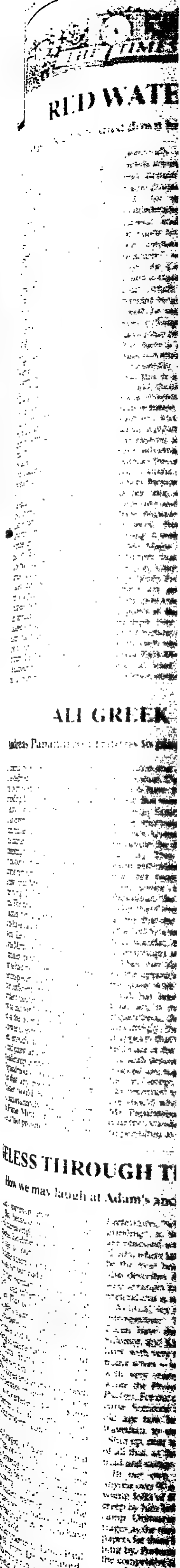


The real William

The call came out of the blue, but I'm flattered," says Eddie, whose career progressed to song-and-dance routines before he threw in acting 15 years ago. "At the time, I remember Joan and Jackie Collins pestering me for autographs."

The society promises a jolly good party with lashings of liquorice wafers.

P-H-S





RED WATER

Major begins to dust down his soapbox

In the dim light of damp January, the topography of the electoral battleground has fast emerged, with enterprise and welfare as its landmarks. John Major now believes he has the enemy's measure. His central line of attack will be that, however far the policy detail of Tony Blair's "stakeholder" society is from being fleshed out, the idea itself is enough to open "red water" between the two parties. Mr Blair's vision, he says, goes far beyond giving free market capitalism a human face. It contains at its core an interventionist philosophy that stands in distinctive opposition to Tory beliefs in individual choice and Tory attitudes to the proper relationship between government and business.

At a breakfast for businessmen at the Hyde Park Hotel yesterday, Mr Major indicated the positions from which he plans to order out his formations. There was the expected listing of Tory achievements — inflation "under more secure lock and key than we have known in my political lifetime", falling unemployment and the beast that more of the adult population are now in work than in Germany. He held out the prospect that this year will see a real revival in disposable incomes and almost pleaded with his audience to act on his passionate conviction that the recession is squarely over.

There was the equally to be expected don't-let-Labour-ruin-it theme, as he presented Mr Blair's putative cabinet as a gallery of rogues, untrustworthy on inflation and soft on crime, the trade unions and defence of British interests in Europe. A vote for Labour would be playing "Russian roulette with all the barrels loaded".

Mr Blair's stakeholder speech, he argued, exposed "the tip of a plan" to impose new burdens on business which could not be benign in their impact, however skilfully they were packaged for sale. He gave one overriding reason: that they would make it more expensive to hire people. On companies, rather than the Exchequer, would fall the costs of Labour plans for corporate training levies, a minimum wage and,

potentially, an unstoppable string of direct debits arising from Labour's commitment to end Britain's opt-out from the European social chapter.

In his speech last November to the Confederation of British Industry, the Labour leader went to great lengths to persuade his audience that ending the opt-out contained no risk that "inefficient practices" would be imported to Britain from the Continent. Although he notably failed to explain just how this was to be done, since much social chapter legislation is decided by qualified majority voting, Britain could, he said, avoid being bound by directives it disagreed with. Many businessmen have since been further lulled into the belief that there is little more to the social chapter than is contained in good corporate practice.

Yesterday Mr Major argued, correctly, that this is a dangerous illusion. Business, he said, should look not just at what is in the social chapter now, but at what it could contain in future. The aim of Britain's European partners was to incorporate their domestic social legislation into the social chapter, with the express aim of eliminating the competitive advantages of lower-cost countries — such as this one. Without the opt-out, labour costs would inescapably rise in Britain, where the non-wage element of the payroll is 18 per cent, compared with 32 per cent in Germany and over 40 per cent in France and Italy. Because the losers would be people not in work, this was not just economically wrong; it would be "plain immoral".

Mr Major is staking his chances on an intuition that between now and the next election, voters will see and recoil from the regulatory fist inside Labour's velvet glove. These are good, but difficult, arguments. Tory politicians are not the most trusted arguers in this regard. They will not easily triumph over the image of social cohesion and common effort that Mr Blair summons with such ease. Mr Major knows it. The Hyde Park Hotel is not Hyde Park; but there was at least a metaphorical soapbox in evidence yesterday morning.

ALL GREEK

Andreas Papandreu returns to play another set

The political drama now being played in Athens could be defined by using none but English words borrowed from Greek: the hysteria surrounding the illness of Andreas Papandreu shows only the Prime Minister's mania for control, his paranoia and hubris, the charisma he still projects over his nation and the catharsis his political opponents are attempting to bring about with a parliamentary motion of no-confidence. The long-term outcome remains an enigma.

In itself the news that Mr Papandreu is recovering after lying ill for so long is, of course, welcome. The man who has dominated Greek politics for a generation was said yesterday to have taken a few steps in his private ward. Less welcome was the news that his wife Mimi, with virtually sole access to the stricken politician, used this fact to insist that he had no intention of stepping down. Her unspoken threat is that he will soon recover sufficient strength to deal with those turbulent lieutenants who have had the temerity to call for his resignation.

The prospect of the avenging leader returning to full power is extremely unlikely. But it has been enough to cover senior Pasok officials and paint any moves within the party for a leadership contest as treason. Indeed, Mr Papandreu's spokesman recently suggested that any move to replace the Prime Minister would be unconstitutional. He was, unfortunately, right: under Greek law the Prime Minister can be replaced only if he is "not present" — a bizarre

definition that covers both his death and his resignation. The two leading contenders for his job have thus attempted to stir a party revolt that would make him resign.

Costas Simitis, a leading internationalist in the reforming wing of the party, and Gerassimos Arsenis, the Defence Minister, both recognise the damage the power vacuum is causing. They have already cast caution aside and called for his resignation. But they may not sway their colleagues. Although even senior ministers such as Karolos Papoulias, the Foreign Minister, acknowledge that Greece is drifting, they fear to take a step that the Greek public, sentimentally attached to a man who triumphed over political scandal, marital discord and physical illness, might see as opportunistic ingratitude.

They may also fail because of the attempt by the opposition New Democracy to force the issue with a parliamentary vote. The result has been to unite Pasok. But in the final act, it may well turn out that Mr Papandreu, the founder of Pasok, destroys, unwittingly, the political vehicle he created. It appears that no one has dared tell him the real state of the party and country. His wife, still with delusions of political influence, has blocked any suggestion of resignation. Only his son George, a junior education minister, has promised to speak to his father frankly. He should advise him to resign forthwith. Mr Papandreu, in health, damaged his country's standing; in sickness he should not be permitted to damage it further.

AGELESS THROUGH THE AGES

How we may laugh at Adam's ancient curse

Old age is man's common enemy — and woman's too. But, because we are living longer and feel increasingly vulnerable to the pains, expense, loneliness and fears of growing old, age is our contemporary bugaboo. The battle against aging is for us what survival was for our rude forefathers, justification for our puritan grandfathers, and respectability and inheritance for our ambitious fathers. That is why *The Times* exploration of ageless ageing this week has hit so many funny-bones so sharply.

Some people have told us that they felt guilty about being so interested in what our *Times* doctor, Thomas Stuttaford, and our other writers have written on this subject. Take heart. These hopes and fears have been here before, not perhaps in quite the same way but with us nonetheless. From Rembrandt's self-portraits of all sorts of literature ancient and modern, ageless ageing is an archetype.

The traditional tragedy of age is not that one is old but that one is still young in a decaying body. Growing up is recognising that one's parents may be as young and silly as oneself — allowing, of course, for their age. From the ancient patriarchs to the American billionaire who is today funding research to make him live for ever, men have fussed about growing old.

By taking constant vitamin C, Linus Pauling survived to 93. From Dr Stuttaford's prescriptions of hormone replacement therapy to the butterfly diet of our Science Editor, there are many roads to mitigating age. The topic has exercised poets from the author of

Ecclesiastes, "when the grinders cease from grinding", to Shakespeare, whose sonnets are obsessed with the subject. "Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang" may be the most beautiful line in poetry. But it also describes the ageing process in man, who arranges hairs across his bald patch to pretend this is not happening to him.

As usual, sex rears its head in such elderly introspection. Therapists such as Alan Coren have their potent panaceas. King Solomon and King David led merry, merry lives, with very many concubines, and very many wives — until old age came creeping, with very many qualms. Then Solomon wrote the *Proverbs*, and David wrote the *Psalms*. For our cult of youth is not a modern cure. Someone asked Sophocles in extreme old age how he felt about sex. The first tragedian to understand women replied: "Shut up, dear boy. I am delighted to be rid of all that, as though I had escaped from a mad and savage master."

In our own world of ageless ageing, anyone over 90 is the outpost sentry. And the young folks of 60 feel that the enemy must creep by him before he can come near their camp. Obituaries replace births and marriages as the most popular sections in newspapers for those for whom the years are slipping by. Postumus. Postumus. They gratify the competitive spirit. Those who keep their eyes looking out at the world and their minds busy stay younger than those putting on masks of cosmetic surgery. We might as well enjoy old age. It is generally better than the alternative.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Doubts on method of BBC selection

From Sir Paul Fox

Sir, Once again, the appointment of a new Chairman of the BBC has been made by the Prime Minister of the day (reports, January 10). As the new Charter of the BBC is about to be endorsed by Parliament, it is time to change this anachronism.

May I suggest that a committee of senior Privy Counsellors should be empowered to see a list of suitable candidates and in this way ensure that the choice is not left entirely to the government of the day.

Sir Christopher Bland has many qualities to commend him as the new Chairman of the BBC, but I think it would have been more reassuring to all licence payers had his appointment been made by a small group representing all parties.

Yours sincerely,
PAUL FOX
(Managing Director,
BBC Television 1989-91),
Garrick Club,
15 Garrick Street, WC2
January 10.

Courts-martial defects

From Mr John Mackenzie

Sir, I am the solicitor with the conduct of ex-Lieutenant Alexander Findlay's application to the European Court of Human Rights (report, December 19; letters, December 28, January 3). I also have the conduct of a number of other applications arising from Army and Royal Navy courts martial.

I constantly hear the claim that the courts-martial system is fair. I also hear the contrary claim. These claims are highly subjective. The case law of the European court has laid down objective standards for a court to comply with the Convention on Human Rights. They seem entirely apposite. The British courts-martial system fails to comply with them.

The most important requirement under Article 6(1) of the convention is that a court should be seen to be wholly independent of the parties. In all three Services a court martial is an *ad hoc* tribunal set up by a "convening officer" who both appoints its members and is the prosecuting authority.

In a Royal Navy court martial the prosecuting arm even appoints the defence advocate, although some independent-minded defendants reject this representation and apply for legal aid for civilian representation. The application for legal aid is to the convening officer.

This fundamental objection to the system hides a multitude of further breaches, none of which are addressed by the current Armed Forces Bill. To do so the Bill would need to provide for a new structure of courts, with dedicated trained staff independent of the Services — clearly an absurdity.

The answer is simple and cheap. Most serious courts martial concern breaches of the civilian criminal code. Pass these cases to the Crown Courts and retain a system of low-level disciplinary tribunals for purely military offences.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN MACKENZIE,
90A The Broadway,
Southall, Middlesex,
January 4.

Home-grown produce

From Mr Ian Merton

Sir, Your report of January 5, "Supermarkets 'damage British fruit growers'", fails to recognise Sainsbury's strenuous efforts to ensure a greater outlet for British produce in our supermarkets.

Over 500 British growers, large and small, have joined our Partnership in Produce scheme, which gives them a year-round market for their produce and helps them to extend their seasons, develop new markets and find new varieties of produce.

We sell some 40 varieties of English apples and pears during the season. The majority of soft fruits, lettuces, tomatoes and tomatoes which we sell during the summer are UK-grown, and 90 per cent of our stocks of fresh produce that can be grown in this country come from the UK.

Yours faithfully,
IAN MERTON
(Director of Produce Buying),
Sainsbury plc,
Stanford House,
Stanford Street, SE1,
January 5.

Elephants in trouble

From Dr Norman Myers

Sir, Your report (December 29) that a British medical team is to travel to the Kiev Zoo to help an elephant with toothache, a mission for which contributors have supplied £9,500. Would the contributors could supply similar funds to support elephant researchers in Africa, who sometimes can hardly afford to fill the petrol tanks of their field vehicles. Admirable as it is to assist an individual elephant, it is still more admirable to help an entire species.

Yours faithfully,
NORMAN MYERS
(Consultant in Environment
and Development),
Green College, Oxford,
January 1.

Realities of a 'stakeholder' economy

From Mr Edgar Parnell

Sir, Peter Riddell ("Why Blair needs more time", January 8) asserts that a Blair-led government could come too soon. Surely the country cannot afford to wait for a genuine "stakeholder economy" (report, January 9) as now advocated by Blair.

Irrespective of which political party is in power, one of the greatest priorities has to be the elimination of adversarial relationships between the various "stakeholders" in our society and the achievement of a common purpose amongst diverse interest groups.

Economic activity is not to be left solely to investors. Businesses are needed to serve the needs of other stakeholder groups — consumers, the workforce, producers, or a specific community. Self-help will have to be given much more encouragement, especially now that both state and municipal forms of enterprise have been widely abandoned.

Irrespective of the ownership structure, all enterprises and the Government will have to achieve a much fairer balance in the allocation of benefits between the stakeholders involved.

Yours faithfully,
E. PARNELL (Director),
Plunkett Foundation,
23 Hanborough Business Park,
Long Hanborough, Oxford,
January 9.

From Mr Stephen Shaw

Sir, It may be that my memory is flawed, but was it not Margaret Thatcher who promoted the concept that all citizens should have a stake in the nation's wealth, be it through property or share ownership?

Perhaps there are distinctions yet to be explained, but as first sight the "stakeholder economy" seems to be less new Labour than a repackaging of new Conservatism.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN SHAW,
Lamb Chambers,
Lamb Building, Temple, EC4.

From Mr Len Webster

Sir, Despite his "whizz-kid" image, Tony Blair seems to be something of a slow learner. The essence of the Singapore Central Provident Fund (letters, January 5) lies firmly in the Singapore Government's commitment to the Singapore dollar. The people of that country have been able to entrust their money to a government which has been successful in maintaining its value.

By contrast, the disastrous decline of sterling over the past 30 years shows that neither the Tory party nor Labour has been able to produce strong, firm government. Britain's decline can easily be seen in its currency: in 1984, £1 was equal to \$83.40, but today it buys \$82.30. 25 years ago, £1 was equal to US\$2.40 but today — against a weak US dollar — £1 is equal to about US\$1.52.

No-fault divorce

From Sir Bryan Thwaites

Sir, The Family Law Bill — enshrining Lord MacKay's idea of no-fault divorce — reaches the Committee stage in the House of Lords tomorrow; and the Government intends that the Commons will, in due course, have a free vote on the matter.

May I remind all Members of Parliament, as they search their consciences, of the opening words of the Roman Catholic bishops' statement, released on November 17, 1995:

Rubbishing Wakefield

From the Bishop of Wakefield
and the Leader of Wakefield
Metropolitan District Council

Sir, Claims by the Tidy Britain Group (report, January 5) that Wakefield is "the filthiest place in Britain" are quite simply rubbish.

The survey which casts such a blight on this fine northern city was, as the group has conceded, merely "a snapshot of one moment in time". We understand that it was based on a mere 15 minutes on three separate days last May.

Millions of pounds have been invested over the past three years in refurbishing the precinct of our splen-

Facial disfigurement

From Ms M. K. Lacy

Sir, I was interested to read Veronica Kish's letter (January 2) about the stereotyping of facially disfigured people as villains in films such as *Goldeneye* and *Batman Forever*.

Not only films but advertisements, too, show discrimination towards those with unusual faces, an example being the current television advertisement by one drinks company.

To suggest that only beautiful people can drink their product, and that those who are not should have cosmetic surgery to transform them, is insensitive humour in the extreme.

Discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex or disability is now illegal. To sex or disability people as fair game for a giggle, as one with a facial disfigurement, find quite unacceptable.

Yours faithfully,
M. K. LACY,
The Croft,
High Street, Farnham, Kent,
January 2.

So much money has been taken from the wage-packets of the British people and wasted that the British Government can no longer meet its social contract, to repay that money in the form of pensions that keep up with the real rate of inflation. Switching to a central provident fund taking 22 per cent or more from income merely provides that much more opportunity for government to behave incompetently.

We can have no more faith in Tony Blair than we can in the current Government. What Britain needs is radical change, honesty and realism, not fairy tales.

Yours faithfully,
LEN WEBSTER,
48 Marshall Road,
Oldbury, West Midlands,
January 8.

From Mr Victor Black

Sir, In your main political articles today William Rees-Mogg ("Facts aren't enough to run the country" tells us that John Major is no good and advises him to say "goodbye"), and Peter Riddell ("Why Blair needs more time") tell us that Tony Blair is not ready to govern.

Could this be the beginning of a campaign to support Paddy Ashdown?

Yours faithfully,
VICTOR BLACK,
Lower Farm House,
Coln Rogers,
Gloucestershire,
January 8.

Electorate's choice

From Mr Tony Marlow, MP for
Northampton North (Conservative)

Sir, The European single currency may or may not be economically beneficial. Its purpose, however, is political: the establishment of a single European State. Anyone who is in any doubt should ask Chancellor Kohl, whose ambition it is to do for Europe what Bismarck did for Germany.

Many commentators now discern little difference in domestic policy between Labour and Conservative. The difference is elsewhere — between those who would risk Britain's future as an assortment of client provinces of Berlin or Brussels, and those who are determined to maintain and extend our sovereign independence.

The electorate's choice of Members of Parliament at the next election will decide which historic alternative will be followed. Those interested in true democracy must see to it that the country is aware of the nature of the decision being taken and the position of each and every candidate on this supreme issue.

Yours faithfully,
TONY MARLOW,
House of Commons,
January 9.

We firmly believe and teach that marriage is absolutely essential to the well-being of society... marriage signifies and requires an irrevocable and exclusive commitment by a man and woman to a partnership of their whole life... the marriage covenant has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.

Nothing could be clearer than that, and one must hope that our legislators will take heed.

Yours faithfully,
BRYAN THWAITES,
Miltonhorpe,
Winchester SO22 4NF,
January 10.

did cathedral — an achievement recognised by an Arts Council award — and huge sums are spent annually to keep this showpiece clean and pleasant.

Liter education programmes are a priority, but given the tight restrictions on council spending, we must continue to allocate resources on a care rather than prevention basis.

Yours etc,
NIGEL WAKEFIELD,
COLIN L. CROXALL
(Leader, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council),
Bishop's Lodge,
Woodthorpe Lane,
Wakefield, West Yorkshire,
January 8.

Big freeze

From the Reverend
E. Philip Schofield

Sir, When I was a lad milk was delivered in churns and served from one- or two-pint measuring jugs. Then came bottles and, with them, an unexpected delight. On a sharp frosty morning the frozen milk forced its way above the bottle top, could easily be eased out, and was a delicacy to be enjoyed — a forerunner of iced lollies.

No such thing these days despite the sharp frost so many of us have experienced. Among the many preservatives in milk do the authorities now insist on the addition of antifreeze?

Yours sincerely,
E. PHILIP SCHOFIELD,
Lantau, 8 Priory Close,
Penyfford, Chester.

Business letters, page 27

Letters for publication may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.

To catch and cure the drink-driver

From the Chair of the
Penal Affairs Consortium

Sir, You report today strong criticism of the Court of Appeal's decision to quash a prison sentence imposed on a first-time drink-driver with a high alcohol reading. However, Mr Justice Sachs's judgment contains a key sentence: "There are other perfectly appropriate ways of dealing with people who drive with excess alcohol."

One such way includes courses for drunken drivers run by the probation service in many areas. These cover the medical, social and financial effects of drunken driving and its potential effect on accident victims and offenders' families. The aim is to help offenders to change their patterns of drinking.

Combined with a probation order and disqualification, these courses have proved an effective way of dealing with many drink-drivers, including repeat offenders and those with particularly high readings. The vast majority of offenders who attend them are not reconvicted of alcohol-related offences.

Unlike prison sentences, these methods increase public protection by helping offenders to become better and safer drivers by the time they get their licences back.

Yours faithfully,
PAUL CAVADINO,
Chair,
Penal Affairs Consortium,
169 Clapham Road, SW9,
January 10.

From Professor K. T. V. Grattan

Sir, Whilst almost everyone will welcome the greater responsibility shown by motorists over drinking and driving, a closer inspection of the figures in your report on breath-test failures over the Christmas period (January 3) shows that when the available figures are viewed as a percentage of tests carried out, the rate varies from just over 1 per cent to about 8 per cent, averaging at about 4.5 per cent.

For the largest available single sample, from Scotland, the failure rate was just over 1 per cent of the 73,735 tests taken, implying a pass rate of nearly 99 per cent.

Surely such figures imply that the era of random testing has actually arrived, in spite of protestations to the contrary.

Yours faithfully,
K. T. V. GRATTAN,
City University,
School of Engineering,
Northampton Square, ECI.

Amplified opera

From the General Director
of English National Opera

Sir, Following letters from Dr Max Proia (December 21), Mr Richard Fisher (December 26) and Mr Ralph Emery (January 3), deploring the sound enhancement used in English National Opera's current production of *La Belle Vivette* at the London Coliseum, may I quote from your review of the production published on December 27: "The spoken dialogue, discreetly amplified, is now audible..."

I assure your correspondents and our audiences that ENO does not amplify singing or recitatives. Opera demands the lightest of touches with the spoken word, however, and in a theatre the size of the London Coliseum, with almost 2,500 seats, discreet sound enhancement is being used in *La Belle Vivette* only for the dialogue, as has been the case in certain productions for quite a few years.

Yours faithfully,
DENNIS MARKS, General Director,
English National Opera,
London Coliseum,
St Martin's Lane, WC2.

V & A funding

From Mr D. A. Callard

Sir, An entrance fee of £10 would be too much for many who might want to visit the V & A (article, Arts, January 8) but, while charging may not be a solution to its funding problems, as the Director, Alan Borg, claims, it could at least be part of the solution.

When I visited in Paris, all museums were free on a Thursday but charged on other days. Might not some variation of this (£1 entrance Thursday, £4 other weekdays, £6 weekends) be a compromise acceptable to all?

Yours sincerely,
D. A. CALLARD,
136 Johnson Road,
Llanishan, Cardiff,
January 8.

Post-turkey torture

From the Reverend Ivor
E. L. Scott-Oldfield

Sir, The plight of Mrs Miller (letter, January 6), who found the Christmas presents she bought going for half-price on Boxing Day, brought back to me John Gilpin's comment on his wife "that, though on pleasure she was bent, she had a frugal mind".

Mrs Miller could, in future, have both the pleasure in giving, and the frugality of purchasing, presents by the simple expedient of celebrating the Epiphany rather than Christmas.

Yours faithfully,
IVOR SCOTT-OLDFIELD,
11 Prior Bolton Street, NI,
January 7.



JANET BUSH 27

Economic optimists ignore Europe at their peril



BOOKS 34, 35

Masterly story of Lincoln made from a piece of folly



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The magic of Paris by Eurostar for £69 return

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THE TIMES

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

THURSDAY JANUARY 11 1996

Insurers warn of gloom ahead over bonus payments

By MARIANNE CURPHEY

PENSIONS and life policyholders were given a warning yesterday to expect a year of disappointing returns after three major life companies cut or froze bonus rates. Despite the strong performance of the stock market last year, Norwich Union froze its annual bonuses on life and pensions policies, while Commercial Union and Scottish Life cut bonuses on life policies.

The companies defended the move as necessary after poor growth in the early 1990s, but analysts suggested the industry in

general was concerned about competition and a fall in new business. Friends Provident also blamed a cut in bonus rates announced last week on the legacy of poor stock market performance in 1994. Rates are an important indication of how companies have fared during the year.

Watson Wyatt, the actuaries, said cuts were the result of life companies paying "over-generous" bonuses during the 1980s and that other firms were likely to follow suit.

Dick Squires, a partner specialising in insurance, said: "Payments were high in the 1980s but for the last couple of years some

companies have not cut back as much as they ought to have done. In 1994 many companies were making losses but continued to pay out the same bonuses."

Rates were likely to remain relatively low, but continuing low inflation would mean they would provide a reasonable return in real terms, he added.

Richard Harvey, finance director of Norwich Union, which is to decide by the end of the year whether to end its mutual status, said the group would pay out a record £800 million this year on nearly 50,000 life and pensions

policies that were maturing, compared with £600 million paid to 40,000 people in 1994.

"With-profits policies are designed to smooth out these peaks and troughs of volatile investment markets," he said. "Low inflation will mean lower investment returns in the 1990s when compared with the soaring figures of the Eighties, but investors will still enjoy good real returns from our well-diversified investment portfolio."

For Norwich Union policyholders, annual bonus rates remain unchanged for unitholders policies. This is 6.5 per cent or life policies

and for pensions it remains at 7.5 per cent.

Additional bonus rates have been improved to reward policyholders who keep to the long-term commitment of these plans. Annual bonuses also remain unchanged on conventional with-profits life and pensions policies: for life, the bonus is 2.5 per cent on the sum assured plus 4.5 per cent on attaching bonus; for pensions, the rates are 2.5 per cent and 5.5 per cent respectively.

Commercial Union announced bonuses on the sum assured for conventional life policies had been reduced from 4 per cent to 3.5 per

cent and from 7.25 to 7 per cent on unitholder with-profits life policies. Conventional pension bonus rates have been cut from 4.8 to 4 per cent, and unitholder with-profits pensions fall from 9 to 8.5 per cent.

For Scottish Life policyholders, the bonus on the sum assured for individual life policies effected after 1968 has been reduced from 2.75 to 2.5 per cent.

Terminal bonus amendments on life policies range from no change at terms of 10 years or less, a reduction at terms of 15 and 20 years, and an increase at terms of 25 years and above.

Gas chief warns of supply trial chaos

By ROSS TIEMAN, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

THE head of TransCo, the British Gas subsidiary that operates Britain's gas pipeline network, is calling on the Government to delay the introduction of competition to supply households with gas until June because the computer system is untried and could fail.

In an interview with *The Times*, Harry Moulson, managing director, said it would be "ludicrous" to press ahead in a trial area covering 500,000 homes on April 1, as the Government plans, when the full computer systems would have been operating for only a month. The Government would "risk chaos for a short-term benefit".

In the worst-case scenario, the system could suffer a catastrophic loss of pressure. If supplies to a city the size of Birmingham were cut, they would take six to seven months to restore, he said.

A two-month delay would cost a typical customer who chose to switch just £5 off their gas bill, Mr Moulson said.

His warning came after the Director-General of Gas Supply, Clare Spottiswoode, ordered an urgent inquiry to determine whether the target date was still achievable.

Tim Eggar, the Energy Minister, has been told that the timetable is in danger because the Department of Trade and Industry has fallen behind schedule in drafting licences needed by companies to take part in the pilot covering Devon, Cornwall and Somerset.

John Mitchell, head of the DTI's oil and gas division, told businessmen that he had warned the minister of a "significant risk" that the DTI would not have the licences ready by February 1, although they were originally to have been available last October.

The warning from Mr Moulson will focus attention on a series of slippages in preparations for the first phase of

a market-opening project designed to give Britain's 18 million household gas consumers a choice of supplier.

In 1993 TransCo lost track of how much gas had been shipped, and how much some industrial customers had received. Mr Moulson said that his company's service last year had been "bloody awful" and that "we are improving but we still haven't cracked it".

If the Government went ahead with the trial on April 1, there were significant risks. The worst outcome would be a breakdown that left TransCo unable to maintain pressure in the pipeline. Because every appliance has to be checked after a failure of supply, reconnecting a city would take six to seven months, he said.

More likely is the risk that TransCo will be unable to confirm the accuracy of meter readings if too many customers opt to switch supplier. That could result in widespread confusion over the bills of up to 20,000 customers three or four months into the trial.

"If the first stage of domestic competition, which is a great move by the Government, is a fiasco, what does it do for 1997, 1998 and the future?", Mr Moulson asked.

TransCo has spent almost two years developing a computer system for managing gas flows and bills, which was scheduled to begin trial operation on October 1 last year. Ernst & Young, the consultant, had warned TransCo that six months was needed to bed in the system, but that it was achievable in four. Only one part of the system has begun operation. On Saturday, gas industry leaders were called to an emergency meeting and told that full trials of the computer will not begin until March 1, just 31 days before the pilot scheme begins.

Gas plea, page 24
Pennington, page 25



Robert Shrager, finance director of Dixons, left, with John Clare, chief executive

Dixons disappoints, page 25

Christmas store sales fail to impress City

By SARAH BAGNALL

CHRISTMAS trading statements from Dixons and Next sent shockwaves through the stores sector yesterday, pushing shares lower as analysts raised in their expectations of retailers' performances over the festive period.

Among the shares hit were Next, down 16p to 437p, Dixons, down 14p to 409p, Boots, down 11p to 598p, and JJB, down 19p to 570p.

Paul Morris, an analyst at SBC Warburg, said: "The City had priced in a phenomenally good Christmas and was expecting to have to make a large number of profit forecast upgrades. When prices have gone up to these levels, companies have to deliver in spades."

Next and Dixons were expected to be among the sector's star performers and although they both turned in good performances they failed to impress the City. Next saw a 13 per cent rise in high street sales and a 17 per cent increase in mail order sales between August and Christmas Eve—marking the fifth year in succession of double-digit sales growth.

Dixons posted a 10 per cent rise in like-for-like sales in the first eight weeks of the second half, which includes Christmas.

Tempus, page 26

Forte battle fuels rush for shares

MORE than 48 million Forte shares were traded yesterday as speculation and institutions bet on the outcome of one of the City's closest-fought takeovers (Eric Reguly writes).

The volume was equivalent to about 2.5 per cent of Forte's share capital. Several so-called Rule 8 disclosures will reveal today which investors have bought 1 per cent or more of the shares.

Forte shares rose 9p to 360p and Granada 16p to 633p. Traders said the volume was triggered by investors "looking for a cheap way" into Granada, whose revised offer is valued at about £3.8 billion.

Gas plea, page 24
Pennington, page 25

George eases stance

By JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

EDDIE GEORGE, Governor of the Bank of England, was yesterday notably less hawkish on inflation, saying that he is not concerned that growth will get out of hand this year and underplaying his own worries last week about wage settlements.

Interviewed on Reuters Television, Mr George said that inflation will probably be at 2.5 per cent or below in 18 months to two years' time and said that the economy could grow at above 3 per cent in the short-term without higher inflation.

He said he expected consumer spending to pick up this year, but this optimism was balanced by concern about the extent of the economic slowdown in Europe, particularly

in Germany and France. These worries were highlighted by yesterday's trade figures.

Britain's deficit with the rest of the world widened in October to its worst level for three years, totalling £1.66 billion compared with £972 million in September, largely because of lower export growth.

The biggest deterioration was in non-European Union trade, but the deficit with Europe also widened.

The Central Statistical Office said that more than half of the deterioration was because of unusually large imports of silver. Even stripping out oil and erratic items, the deficit widened in October.

Economists noted that later figures have already showed

that the non-EU deficit narrowed sharply in November and said that October's figures overplayed the extent of Britain's worsening trade performance. However, the CSO said that the deficit was still on a widening trend overall.

Another sign of economic weakness came with the seventeenth consecutive monthly fall in the longer leading cyclical indicator in November, reaching its lowest level since early 1991.

The Bundesbank yesterday cut its repurchase rate by two basis points to 3.75 per cent and there was some speculation that France may today cut its key intervention rate.

Economic view, page 27
Home prices, page 24

Eurostar blow to Tunnel's future

By JONATHAN PRYNN, TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

EUROTUNNEL's fight for financial survival was dealt another setback yesterday when new forecasts for the Eurostar high-speed train service revealed that growth in passenger traffic will fall disastrously below its target for the rest of the decade.

Sir Alastair Morton, co-chairman of Eurotunnel, said that the latest projections delivered by European Passenger Services, the British, French and Belgian state-owned operator of Eurostar, were "hopelessly" behind previous expectations.

The original projections for Eurostar made in 1986 forecast that 16.4 million passengers would use the 186mph Channel Tunnel train in its first year of operation, then expected to be 1993, this fore-

cast was later cut to 13 million and then to 6 million in 1994. In fact, last year, the first full year of Eurostar services, only 3 million passengers used the Waterloo-Paris and Brussels train. This is expected to rise to 5 million this year. Passenger traffic is forecast to reach about ten million by the turn of the century.

As Eurotunnel receives 60 per cent of Eurostar's passenger revenue, the shortfall represents a serious loss of income for the debt-laden company at a time when it is fighting for financial survival.

A safety net built into its contract with EPS means Eurotunnel will receive a minimum of £200 million a year. However, this represents only a fraction of what Eurotunnel hoped to be earning by

now. The safety net was only scheduled to be in place for the first few months of operation.

But latest forecasts suggest it will continue to be triggered until 2000 at earliest. "The railways have not delivered what their owners promised us," said Sir Alastair. "The fact is, the railways have failed to get stuck into their market particularly for tourists," he added, blaming poor marketing and high prices.

The EPS news came as Eurotunnel announced 1995 turnover of about £280 million. Sir Alastair said turnover this year was likely to grow at least 50 per cent to about £420 million, still less than the £500 million forecast in the October 1994 rights issue prospectus.

Pennington, page 25



Morton: "poor marketing"

Wontners to back Forte in bid battle

By ERIC REGULY

THE Wontner family, the controlling shareholder of the Savoy Hotel group, has come out in support of Forte, its old enemy which is fighting a takeover attempt by Granada.

Granada has said it would sell Forte's 68 per cent equity stake in the Savoy if its £3.8 billion hostile offer for Forte succeeds. The Wontners fear that Granada will try to break the structure that gives them voting control in spite of having only a relatively small piece of the equity.

Lord Thurso, one of the two Wontner nominees on the Savoy board, said: "It would suit the family if Forte won. It means that the family block could not be challenged." The

Wontners support for Forte would have been unimaginable a few years ago. Forte launched a takeover bid for the Savoy in 1981. The struggle lasted until 1994, when Forte reshaped the Savoy's board and management team.

Forte, if it remains independent, said it will distribute its Savoy shares to its shareholders. The Savoy predicted that pre-tax profits for 1995 would increase 165 per cent to £11.4 million. The annual dividend will be doubled to £4 million, equivalent to 14p for the A shares and 7p for the B shares, which have 20 times the voting power.

Pennington, page 25

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□ Deadline nears for energy fiasco □ Protecting interests of cross-Channel investors □ Split shares past their sell-by date

The dangers of a gas leak

□ THE politicians' attempts to introduce competition into gas and electricity are heading for such a disastrous debut that there must be a few faint hearts there praying they will not still be in government when it arrives.

Open competition in domestic electricity in 1998 appears no nearer, with the industry deliberately dragging its feet because the companies can see no advantage in having their cosy monopolies prised open like an oyster. After the mess made of the competitive market for large users in 1994, one can sympathise.

The situation in gas is considerably worse, because the deadline is almost here. Now TransCo, ordered to conduct a limited trial from All Fools Day, has flipped open the calendar, counted on its fingers and proved it cannot be done.

It is tempting to blame British Gas, TransCo's owner, if only because blaming British Gas is the fashionable thing these days. But it is clear the Government, for ideological reasons, is forcing the newly demerged business to run before it can walk.

According to Harry Moulson at TransCo, which in the end has to make competition — and the pipeline system — work, Britain is trying to do in two years what has taken America ten. All the

same, Europe's fourth largest computer system has been equipped with the world's tenth largest database containing more than 18 million meter addresses.

But while TransCo is about ready to begin chasing down teething problems, the computer trials are being held up by the Trade Department's failure to issue licences to the 40 or so companies anxious to compete to supply gas. Chris Rees, of Touche Ross, has been drafted in by Ofgas, the industry regulator, to report on whether it is still possible to open up the pipelines on April 1.

Ernst & Young, TransCo's advisers, warned that the new computers should be tested for a minimum of four months to ensure shipments of gas could be matched to the right customers. But Mr Rees has been asked to say whether it is safe to proceed when the full system has been operational for just 31 days.

Mr Moulson says it is just not worth the risk. He should know. His business has got it wrong twice before.

The real danger is that

TransCo will not be able to match the volumes pumped into the system by shippers with those billed to customers. TransCo wants Ofgas to ration the pace at which customers can switch suppliers so that it can verify meter readings.

If customers are left to take their own readings, the temptation to under-read when changing to lower-cost supplier might prove irresistible. There will inevitably be glitches in a list containing more than 18 million addresses. In fact, there is no particular reason why any of the first batch of gas bills that go out this autumn should be correct.

No light at end of Eurotunnel

□ SO Eurotunnel would like a Stock Exchange inquiry into just who was playing ducks and drakes with its share price earlier this week. It could perhaps be filed next to the matching report from the Paris Bourse on who was rigging that market ahead of the 1994 rights issue.

Rather, it will not, because there



never was a firm conclusion reached by the Bourse, and there is going to be precious little action in London either.

Eurotunnel shares fell after rumours that the company was bust, which is curious because most of us had come to that conclusion years ago. The rumours spoke of imminent receivership, innocently denied. This would have required the banks to write off large chunks of group debt, heading towards £9 billion and rising.

Those bankers are going to have to write off much of the debt anyway as part of whatever financial package emerges. Eurotunnel's shares are like the cartoon character, running out of road and over a cliff, who

remains poised in mid-air for a while until he realises his plight and plummets to the ground. The impossibility of valuing the shares on any rational basis, rather than any organised market skulduggery, more likely explains the sharp gyrations in the price once the rumour mills started to grind. Investors, who have given up on any dividends and accepted they face heavy dilution, will want to know what will happen to their perks of free travel on the tunnel after the refinancing. This is the only real return they have seen, and to some it has proved an attractive one. The board has a duty to shareholders to ensure this, too, is not to be diluted.

In all this gloom, it is easy to overlook the project's achievements. The tunnel has meant a huge expansion for the cross-Channel market, pre-Christmas bookings running some 30 per cent ahead despite the franc fort.

Negotiations to create a new financial structure under which Eurotunnel can operate at a profit will be long and tortuous, with 200 banks and a healthy arbitrage market in that dis-

ressed debt to contend with. The Eurotunnel board will be aided, paradoxically, by the implied threat of receivership if they fail.

Savoyards stake their claim

□ WHILE the City may be holding fire, one interested party has already taken firm sides in the Granada/Forte scuffle. The Savoy Group would prefer Forte to emerge as the victor.

That view is understandable, if self-serving. Granada has said Forte's stake in the hotelier is one of the underperforming assets first out of the door if it wins and is already talking to buyers. One of these, it is accepted, is Prince al-Waleed, the Saudi saviour of Euro Disney and Canary Wharf.

While the Prince might be regarded as a relatively benign purchaser, his arrival or that of any other mega-millionaire can only mean one thing: the end of the Savoy as an independent entity. He would be required to make a formal offer for the rest; in any case, no future owner is going to want most of the share capital but

a minority of the votes. The safeguard at the Savoy held off Lord Forte for the best part of two decades because there were too many shareholders. The Prince, however, will merely throw sufficient cash at those Swiss funds with swing shareholdings until they sell out.

By contrast, Forte's plans if he survives are to distribute the shares to his own investors *pro rata*, so giving the Savoyards the best of both worlds, a wide shareholder base but continuing control through the B shares. This is simply not on. Now is the time for that archaic split-share structure to be dismantled, or at least for the board to start moving in this direction. That structure masks the true value of the more widely held A shares, making it more difficult for Forte investors to weigh the Granada offer against their board's intention.

Magic formula

□ THE Saatchi & Saatchi agency has marked the first anniversary of the split with the brothers' robust fashion. "It's true, the 'magic' left Saatchi & Saatchi on January 11th 1995," a corporate brochure admits, referring to one of the bloodiest days for market defections. "As usual, it came back at 9.30am the following morning."



Loadmasters: Chris Thomas, left, the managing director of Mercury Airfreight Holdings, which has bought Virgin Mailing & Distribution, the wrapping and mailing division of Virgin Aviation Services, with Alan Chambers, the managing director of Virgin Aviation Services. Virgin will emerge with a 20 per cent interest in the enlarged group

United pub merger deal near

SHARES in United Breweries, the public house group that completed a restructuring last April, were suspended at 1.15p at the company's request after it emerged that a reverse takeover is in the pipeline (writes Philip Pangalos).

United, which has an estate of 140 mostly tenanted pubs in London, the Home Counties and Thames Valley, said it is in advanced talks which, if successful, will lead to the acquisition of a company that owns and operates a public house estate of a similar size to its current one.

Industry experts expect United, which is capitalised at £11.1 million and is based in Buckingham, to merge with an unquoted pub company based in a similar part of the country and with a largely tenanted estate.

Sainsbury chief's role split to bolster grocery business

By SARAH BAGNALL

J SAINSBURY, the supermarket group, is to split the role of chairman and chief executive and has named Dino Adriano as heir apparent to the post of chief executive of the UK supermarket business.

One of the top-level management changes revealed by the company yesterday is that David Sainsbury, chairman and chief executive, is relinquishing the latter job, which is to be split into two separate posts. The first — and most important — is chief executive of the UK supermarket business, a job that ultimately will be filled by Mr Adriano, now chairman of Homebase, the group's DIY chain. The second chief executive post covers Homebase and the group's American businesses, which include Shaw's.

Mr Sainsbury said: "We have decided to have two chief executives because the UK supermarket business is a very substantial part of the group and we need to have the chief executive totally focused on the business." The UK supermarket business accounts for about 80 per cent of group sales. Mr Adriano, 52, takes over his new post at the end of 1997. In the interim, Tom Vyner, joint managing director, will hold it with Mr Adriano as his deputy.

Analysts welcomed Mr Adriano's appointment but were disappointed by the two-year delay. Tony MacNery, an analyst at NatWest Securities, said: "The disappointment is that Vyner is staying on so long. Typically for the business, which is conservative and plodding, it's a slow step in the right direction."

Philip Dorgan, an analyst at Strauss Turnbull, agreed:

"Swifter action would be preferable. Sainsbury often criticised as not reacting quickly enough and then another example. On balance it is good news but it could have been better."

Mr Sainsbury will be executive chairman in charge of strategy, with the two executives reporting directly to him. The company also announced that Dr Quarmby, joint managing director, will be responsible for business development. Sainsbury is looking internally and externally for a candidate to fill the second chief executive post.

The retailer is due to announce a trading statement at the end of January, with analysts widely expected to be cautious and reveal it is losing market share. Sainsbury shares fell 1p to 388p.

Dixons disappoints with 41% rise at half time

By SARAH BAGNALL

DIXONS, the electrical stores group, yesterday revealed a smaller than expected rise in interim profits and a Christmas trading statement that dampened market confidence in the retail sector.

Pre-tax profits rose 41 per cent to £37.5 million in the 28 weeks to November 11. Analysts' forecasts had clustered around the £35 million to £38 million mark but in the run-up to Christmas a couple of stockbrokers had pushed up their forecasts to £44 million.

Although analysts' predictions for the half year proved over-optimistic, most maintained their full-year forecasts of about £135 million. Disappointment at the size of the increase in the interim dividend contributed to a 14.5p fall in the share price to 409.5p.

The company said sales in the first eight weeks of the second half, which include Christmas, were up 23 per cent overall and 10 per cent on a like-for-like basis. The advances were fuelled by strong sales of personal computers. Dixons said gross margins were similar to last year.

The first half saw strong

sales from each of the group's four retail operations: Dixons, Currys, PC World and The Link, the communications specialist.

The 350 Dixons stores lifted sales by 11 per cent to £262 million. A refurbishment programme helped lift like-for-like sales 9 per cent. Before refurbishment the stores were recording like-for-like sales declines of about 2 per cent.

Currys sales rose 15 per cent

to £464 million, while like-for-like sales advanced 10 per cent. Dixons is moving Currys to out-of-town sites. It has 199 out-of-town superstores and sees room for a total of 250. Of the 182 high street Currys stores, up to 100 will close as they fail to meet profit targets or fall into the catchment area of new superstores.

PC World sales leapt 83 per cent to £93 million and like-for-like sales rose 24 per cent.

Seven new stores lifted the total to 21, and there are plans to open a further 30 over the next couple of years.

The Link made its first contribution to sales, with the 32 stores achieving turnover of £6 million.

The interim dividend, due on March 4, was lifted 14 per cent to 2.05p. Earnings were 5.9p a share, up 59 per cent.

Tempus, page 26

Mixed sales for Whitbread

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

WHITBREAD, the brewing and hotel group, reported yesterday that Christmas sales overall were ahead of the previous year, but that results in the rural businesses had been disappointing.

The City interpreted the results as broadly neutral, but the share price fell 8p to 673p. Analysts are forecasting full-year profits of about £280 million, up 2 per cent on 1995.

Peter Jarvis, the chief execu-

tive, said that high street and retail park businesses, which include TGI Friday, Threshers and Pizza Hut performed strongly. Out-of-town pubs and restaurants, including Brewers Fayre and Beefeater, were adversely affected by the weather and Christmas rush.

The brewery side of the business recorded a strong increase in sales. The hotel operations, which include Travel Inn and the recently

purchased Marriott chains, continued to trade well.

Whitbread's recently agreed acquisition of Forte's roadside businesses for £1.05 billion, if the Granada bid for Forte is rejected, continues Whitbread's expansion into hotels and restaurant, although rumours that it is looking to sell its brewing division have been denied.

Tempus, page 26

Brent Walker 'mugged'

By JON ASHWORTH

BANKERS who ousted George Walker from the helm of his leisure empire nearly five years ago, behaved like "the mafia" and were guilty of a corporate mugging, a television documentary claims tonight.

Mr Walker, who claims to have lost £30 million as a result of the banks' actions, remains deeply embittered by the events of May 1991 which led to his removal as chief executive of Brent Walker.

Speaking in *My Brilliant Career* (BBC2, 8pm), Mr Walker claims banks were falling over themselves to lend him money during the heady days of the 1980s. He recalls: "Everyone wanted to lend

money. Please borrow my money. Please take my money off me."

Mr Walker and two former Brent Walker directors talk candidly about the late night meeting at the company's Trocadero headquarters in Piccadilly, London, during which representatives of Brent Walker's banks demanded Mr Walker's removal. They presented a letter to the board stating that the banks, owed £1.5 billion, would withdraw their support if Mr Walker remained as chief executive.

Alan Bobroff, a director of Brent Walker from 1985 to 1991, tells the BBC: "If we resisted, the directors could be held personally liable for



Walker: bitter

many hundreds of millions of pounds. We were being mugged. It was a corporate mugging." Mr Walker's wife, Jean, adds: "It was almost like

the mafia. We were being threatened."

A vote was taken at about 4.30am, and Mr Walker lost by a margin of one. He and his wife stood up and left the room. He recalls: "I was numb. I was completely without thought. I just couldn't focus any more. It was the finish of my life. It was gone." Jean Walker adds: "George said: 'I'm dead', and I said: 'Oh, don't be so silly. One door closes, another one opens' — and that was it."

Mr Walker talks about his trial, and subsequent acquittal on charges of theft and false accounting. He reflects: "There's no doubt about it. If I had been guilty, I would have gone to prison. It would have destroyed me and my family."

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STOCK MARKET



MICHAEL CLARK

London catches a cold as New York freezes

THE arctic conditions that have brought Wall Street almost to a standstill this week, swept through the London stock market yesterday and share prices fell sharply.

An overnight sell-off that saw the Dow Jones Industrial average tumble almost 70 points and evidence of further selling when trading resumed in New York last night sealed London's fate.

Behind the losses on Wall Street is the failure to resolve the deadlock over the US federal budget. After such a strong run of late, it was inevitable that share prices were vulnerable.

At one stage, the FT-SE 100 index was down almost 40 points, having had to contend with a gloomy set of economic figures showing Britain's trade gap with the rest of the world widening to its worst since December 1992.

In the event, the index closed above its worst, 28.8 down at 3,671.5, with brokers in London banking, perhaps forlornly, on an early rally on Wall Street. By the close a total of 777 million shares had changed hands.

It was inevitable that the battle between Granada and Forté should continue to dominate investors' attention. But there was no sign of the widely predicted down raid by Granada on Forté.

One company caught in the crossfire this week is Whitbread, which fell a further 6p to 675p, for a two-day deficit of 23p. Whitbread has agreed to buy Forté's roadside operations, including Travelodge, Welcome Break and Happy Eater, for £1.05 billion. The deal is dependent on the remaining Granada's £3.8 billion final offer.

As a result, the news that sales and profits at Whitbread during the Christmas season were in line with expectations and ahead of last year was largely ignored. Bear volumes were significantly up and the take-home trade enjoyed a strong performance.

Yesterday the Forté share price rose 9p to 360p on turnover of more than 48 million shares. Brokers began taking the view that this week's improved terms from Granada might be enough to tip the battle in its favour.

At one stage, ABN Amro Hoare Govett, Granada's broker, was said to have bid 360p for a block of five million shares. But it is unlikely the



Eurotunnel was back on track on holiday trade reports

purchase was made on behalf of Granada, which climbed 16p to 653p.

Sainsbury lost an early 10p lead to finish 1p cheaper at 388p following confirmation of a series of management changes. Brokers expressed disappointment with the changes, which saw David Sainsbury holding on to both roles of chairman and chief

Monument Oil & Gas made further headway, adding another 1 1/2p to a year's high of 63 1/2p in buoyant trading that saw more than three million shares change hands and stretching the rise during the past two days to 5p. Brokers say that a large seller has now completed his business and withdrawn.

There had been hopes that Dino Adriano would be appointed chief executive. The other supermarket chains lost ground in line with the rest of the market. Asda slipped 1 1/2p to 109p, Argus 9p to 537p, New Save 3p to 506p, and Tesco 7p to 299p.

Half-year figures from Dixons, the electrical goods retailer, received a cool reception

mas, with the price falling 15p to 438p. Sales during the autumn rose 13 per cent, with sales at the Next Directory 17 per cent ahead of the previous year. BZW was impressed with Next's performance and raised its forecast for the full year by an extra £4 million to £122 million.

Kingfisher plans to splash out almost £60 million on buying a 20 per cent stake in

BUT, France's fourth largest electrical retailer, Kingfisher is buying the shares from Andre Venturini, BUT's founder, and will speak for almost 15 per cent of the votes.

Kingfisher already owns Darty, the leading French electrical retailer. Kingfisher ended 10p lower at 528p.

Eurotunnel managed to claw back Tuesday's losses with a rise of 7p to 84p after revealing it had received the most of holiday traffic over the festive season. Tourist traffic increased 21 per cent to 163,305 vehicles during December, although it meant a drop in freight-carrying vehicles. Fewer trains were run because of the French public workers' strikes.

The group is expected to announce soon that 1995 sales will top £275 million. The current year shows a 50 per cent rise.

Campbell & Armstrong, the building specialist, rose 4p to 20p. Highland Electronics has topped up its holding with the purchase of a further 335,518 shares, raising its total to 2.5 million, or 17.3 per cent. City speculators are hoping the next move will be a full bid for the company.

Acorn Computer was a firm market, adding 2 1/2p at 238p on news of a development agreement. The group has struck a deal with Oracle to develop reference designs for a series of network computing products.

GILT-EDGED: Worries over the US federal budget deadline continue to cast a shadow over world bond markets. Even so, bonds in London underperformed compared with other European markets.

At one stage the March series of the Long Gilt March series to test the impact of resistance level, but later reduced its deficit to finish 1 1/2p down on the session at £109 1/2. A total of 62,000 contracts were completed.

In the cash market, benchmark Treasury 8 per cent 2013 finished a couple of ticks lower at £102 1/2, while at the shorter end Treasury 8 per cent 2000 lost a similar amount at £104 1/2.

NEW YORK: Shares on Wall Street stayed weak in the wake of Tuesday's fall, though leading high-tech stocks regained some strength. By midday the Dow Jones Industrial average was 5,098.33, down 33.80 points.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):
Dow Jones 5098.33 (-31.80)
S&P Composite 604.99 (-4.46)

Tokyo:
Nikkei Average 20012.32 (-39.78)

Hong Kong:
Hang Seng 10064.63 (-122.57)

Amsterdam:
SIX Index 499.21 (-1.68)

Sydney:
ASX 2238.2 (-24.6)

Frankfurt:
DAX 2338.19 (-11.47)

Singapore:
Straits 2362.11 (-11.49)

Brussels:
General 8705.49 (-49.48)

Paris:
CAC-40 1910.11 (-1.18)

Zurich:
SEA Gen 736.50 (-5.53)

London:

FT 30 2725.9 (-12.8)

FT 100 3071.5 (-26.38)

FTSE Mid 250 4094.5 (-31.4)

FTSE 250 1825.4 (-14.3)

FTSE Eurotrack 100 1510.99 (-16.12)

FT A All-Share 1790.91 (-15.44)

FT New Sharetrack 1931.36 (-14.92)

FT Phad Interest 114.08 (+0.02)

FT Govt Secs 95.29 (+0.12)

Bulgaria 31.74

SEAO Volume 954.20

USA (Datanorm) 188.81 (+0.22)

US\$ 1.5482 (-0.0002)

German Mark 2.2222 (-0.0079)

Exchange Index 631 (-0.2)

Bank of England official doc (4pm)

ESCU 1.8001

CEST 1.8001

RPI 149.8 Nov (3.1%) Jan 1997-100

RPIX 149.8 Nov (2.9%) Jan 1997-100

Cash Conv Int 37

Century Int 117

Com de Part Fin 510

Cox Insurance 113

Crown Products 35

Dmatak 73 -2

Finabury Tech (100) 107

Geacous Gp (200) 220

Jupiter Split Cap 87

Jupiter Split Inc 89

Manx & Omas 20 -1

National Grid (204) 190

Northern Petroleum 75

Nitin Petrol Wrs 8

Polymer Pharm 134 -2

Revelation Pcc 100

Rushmore Wynn 3

SkyPharma 7

Unicom Int (139) 143

Vicore 135

Viewline 135

Ransomes n/p (48) 6

SWP Group n/p (24) 14

Seaford Res n/p (59) 19

SkyPharma n/p (4) 9

Sunlife Spk n/p (23) 3

Westbury n/p (150) 25

RIBES:

Eurodollar 88p (+15p)

Acorn Comp 238p (+25p)

Morland 573p (+20p)

Trinity Int 378p (+13p)

Church 410p (+13p)

Airbus 418p (+12p)

FALLS:

Fibronic Com 388p (-42p)

Stagecoach 328p (-17p)

Telecom 384p (-16p)

Telecom 384p (-16p)

USA Hedge 375p (-16p)

Milal 403p (-16p)

Vickers 282p (-10p)

Bellway 284p (-10p)

Next 437p (-16p)

Closing Prices Page 30

TEMPUS

Post-prandial blues

THE traditional pre-Christmas cheer from retailers appears to have suffered more than usually from excessive optimism. Only a handful of Britain's retailers have revealed figures for the Christmas period, but sentiment has changed sharply.

Yesterday's trigger was trading statements from Next and Dixons. Neither company released poor figures — both notched up strong underlying sales advances; the problem was that the results were not quite good enough. Next and Dixons are currently the darlings of the retail sector and analysts were expecting a glittering performance for both over the Christmas period.

Evidence of more modest achievements sent analysts back to their calculators to recompute their forecasts for the sector. The biggest fallers were those companies expected

to outshine their rivals. Dixons shares shed 4.2 per cent, with Next down 3 per cent, while JJB Sports and Boots also lost ground. For those retailers, such as WH Smith, that are expected to show relatively lacklustre performances, the falls were less pronounced.

Reduced expectations have trimmed the sector's rating in relation to the market. A 10 per cent premium at the end of 1995, to 30 per cent outperformance, retailers needed to produce results impressive enough to justify upgrading profit forecasts. Sadly, the market is now convinced that the consumer continued to watch his purse last month and profit upgrades have been more than outnumbered by mark-downs. Although part of the premium was unwound yesterday, the shares still have further to fall.

Kingfisher

IN THE short term, the best news from Kingfisher has only fringe experience via B&Q.

Kingfisher is paying more than 19 times historic earnings for BUT, a discount retailer serving the French new-home buyer. The high multiple is expected to fall to the mid-teens but it will be years before Kingfisher can

make cost savings by merging the two businesses.

If Kingfisher had announced the acquisition of 5 per cent of a German electrical retailer, celebrations would be in order. However, it is hoping for a French retail recovery and the decision to invest in furniture suggest its French ambitions are larger than expected.



Whitbread

RUMOURS of the death of brewing at Whitbread are premature. The company's dash into the leisure business looks set to continue with, or without, Forté's roadside businesses. But Whitbread does not need to sell breweries to fund the £1 billion purchase of Happy Eaters and Little Cliffs.

In fact, Whitbread's strong brewing performance over the past year encourages the view that the company is seeking to expand further its beer interests. Speculation has centred on Carlsberg, Tetley, joint owned by Allied Domecq and Carlsberg. Should Granada succeed in its bid for Forté, denying Whitbread all but the scraps of the roadside business, the company could well opt for a brewer. Even with the Forté businesses, Whitbread probably has the strength to buy a brewer as well.

Only two years ago Whitbread expected to see its

12.5 per cent share of the brewing market slowly erode. But, in the face of competition, Whitbread has improved its share to 14 per cent and continues to increase sales while keeping a lid on costs. Whitbread shares have drifted as the initial Forté excitement wore off, providing investors an opportunity to buy one of the better shares in the sector.

Vibroplant has struck a better bargain than expected with the sale of its American plant hire business, but Vibroplant is left with the problem of how to invest the proceeds which well exceed the market worth of the group. American Hi-Lift, which rents cherry pickers, has enjoyed a rapid recovery over the past year with profits in the first half exceeding the UK level, where margins have been eroded by competition.

The UK construction reces-

sion has left plant hire companies scrambling for business and since September prices have fallen by 5 per cent. With no sign of an upturn, Vibroplant needs to increase its market share, currently a mere 2.3 per cent. Hence yesterday's deal, which would leave the plant hire group with net cash of some £15 million after tax, ample funds for the purchase of rival businesses.

Vibroplant's rating has suffered from the construction recession and at 81p, the shares are at a discount of more than 40 per cent to net asset value, including the American cash. The company is only renting 60-70 per cent of its fleet, so any new business from acquisitions should provide an immediate boost to profits. If Vibroplant spends its money well, the share discount will narrow, but it must act quickly or the cash will be a further drag on earnings.

EDITED BY CARL MORTISHED



DIXONS GROUP: CHRISTMAS TRADING FAILS TO MEET EXPECTATIONS

COMMODITIES

LONDON COMMODITY EXCHANGE

ICEBERG (London 0.0000)

CRUDE OILS (\$/barrel FOB)

Brent Physical 18.50 -0.01

Brent 15 day (Mar) 17.85 -0.35

WTI (Mar) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Apr) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (May) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Jun) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Jul) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Aug) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Sep) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Oct) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Nov) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Dec) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Jan) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Feb) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Mar) 18.50 -0.20

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WTI (Jul) 18.50 -0.20

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WTI (Jul) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Aug) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Sep) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Oct) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Nov) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Dec) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Jan) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Feb) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Mar) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Apr) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (May) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Jun) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Jul) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Aug) 18.50 -0.20

WTI (Sep) 18.50 -0.20

LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES

FT-SE 100

Previous open interest 62000

FT-SE 250

Previous open interest 3113

Three Month Sterling

Previous open interest 34000

Three Mth Eurodollar

Previous open interest 97047

Three Mth Euro DM

Previous open interest 97047

Long Gilt

Previous open interest 10000

German Govt Bond

Previous open interest 10000

Three Month ECU

Previous open interest 10000

Euro Swiss Franc

Previous open interest 10000

Italian Govt Bond

Previous open interest 10000

US 10 Year Treasury

Previous open interest 10000

US 30 Year Treasury

Previous open interest 10000

US 5 Year Treasury

Previous open interest 10000

US 1 Year Treasury

Previous open interest 10000

US 6 Month Treasury

Previous open interest 10000

THE TIMES CITY DIARY

Sweet and sour — with ice

ANALYSTS fighting their way through New York's snow storms will be doing so with dread in their hearts. Bloomberg's second annual survey of the 25 worst analysts on Wall Street is out, and senior partners will be scouring the lists for names.

Last year, the survey, published in *Financial World*, America's oldest business magazine, only listed the "worst 25" analysts. Hence it was dubbed the Lemon List. This year, the 25 best analysts and 20 brokerage houses are also ranked, hence it is dubbed the Sweet and Sour list.

It is bitter sweet for telecoms equipment analyst Theresa Murphy — last year's No 1 Lemon. *FW* reports that she is not on any list this year "because she was the 26th worst performer". *FW* further notes that another on the 1995 Lemon List "is no longer in equity research".

Supply-side hitch
THERE is a thoughtful touch to the invitation to today's wedding of Jenny Tora, senior fund manager at IAI International, the US fund management side of Hill Samuel, and Nick Ansell, BZW's head of oil sales research. Bidding their friends to a champagne reception at Trinity House, where the musically versed Jenny has arranged a tuxedo to sing, they write: "we have been together for some years. At last count we had four ironing boards, four electric kettles and several toasters and feel a car boot sale might be the only solution to our over-supply situation. So please, don't buy us a wedding present. Instead, treat yourself or loved one or make a donation to a favourite charity." Here's hoping none of the toasters packs up.

"We are also doubling the size of our dividend"

Flood of offers
HERE'S enterprise for you. After Noah, the Islington antiques and furniture emporium, is having a sale. Everything, except beds and a few selected items, has been marked down 10 per cent. On items over £10, shoppers can elect to toss a coin — heads secures you 15 per cent off. Tails you lose, and get only 5 per cent off.

Over-qualified
MICHELE BRADLEY, a partner specialising in commercial property at law firm Forsyte Saunders Kerman, was asked by *The Lawyer* magazine to recall her most embarrassing moment. "Shortly after I was made partner, I attended a major lease-negotiating meeting. The other sides' solicitors ushered me into the wrong room and interviewed me for a job as a trainee solicitor. I didn't get it, she reveals."

I HAVE sad news for the 566 people in Britain who are shareholders in Malaysia Mining Corporation. They had better start brushing up on their Malay. After 20 years of maintaining a branch register in the UK and a listing on the London Stock Exchange, the register is closing and the listing is being terminated on January 31.

COLIN CAMPBELL

The European drive to hit Maastricht deficit targets threatens to throw UK exports off course

THE storm clouds are gathering over Europe, but Britain seems oblivious. Our great leaders have been practically everywhere else, in mind and body. Michael Portillo has been carrying the Euro-sceptic standard and a grudge against Emma Nicholson from the United Arab Emirates to the Philippines and Japan. Tony Blair just managed to get out of Japan in time to miss Mr Portillo and gave Singapore his vision of a stakeholder society. Michael Howard was in Delhi, defending arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Kenneth Clarke was touring Latin America, touting for privatisation business. Michael Heseltine was the nearest any of them got to the heart of Europe, slugging Mr Blair from the Italian holiday resort of Amalfi.

John Major, meanwhile, had his head in his fish pond in Huntingdon, trying to avoid the flak flying so wistfully around the world. In splendid isolation, he dutifully put out his now monthly message, warning his party to stop its fighting, and launched his re-election campaign.

The message, which is going to be rammed home repeatedly this year, is that the economy is shaping up nicely, that the pain is receding and that the British consumer is going to come back with a vengeance and win the election for the Conservatives.

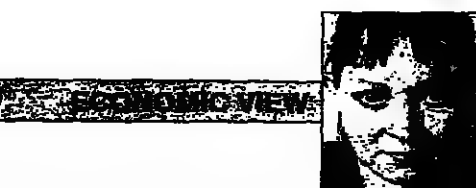
The economic debate in Britain is now dominated by whether the Government is right to predict that consumer spending will increase by 3.5 per cent this year and help the Treasury to meet its target for economic growth of 3 per cent. The fact that the focus is almost entirely on whether the consumer beast will finally stir reflects on how near the election now might be. The Government is relying on the notion that consumer confidence will translate into votes.

But there is scarcely any debate about what will happen this year in the other sources of economic growth. Much has been written about the involuntary build-up of stocks in Britain last year and how quickly these will be run down so that healthy growth can resume. The stocks cycle should mean a very weak end of 1995 and beginning of 1996. Investment is still uncertain, with spending on plant and machinery looking reasonably healthy, but investment in construction looking very weak.

But possibly the most contentious area is Britain's trade performance. The Government is predicting growth in export volumes this year of 8.25 per cent, a better performance than the 6.5 per cent the Treasury estimates was achieved in 1995. Imports are expected to grow by 7.75 per cent, so leading to an overall improvement in Britain's visible trade deficit.

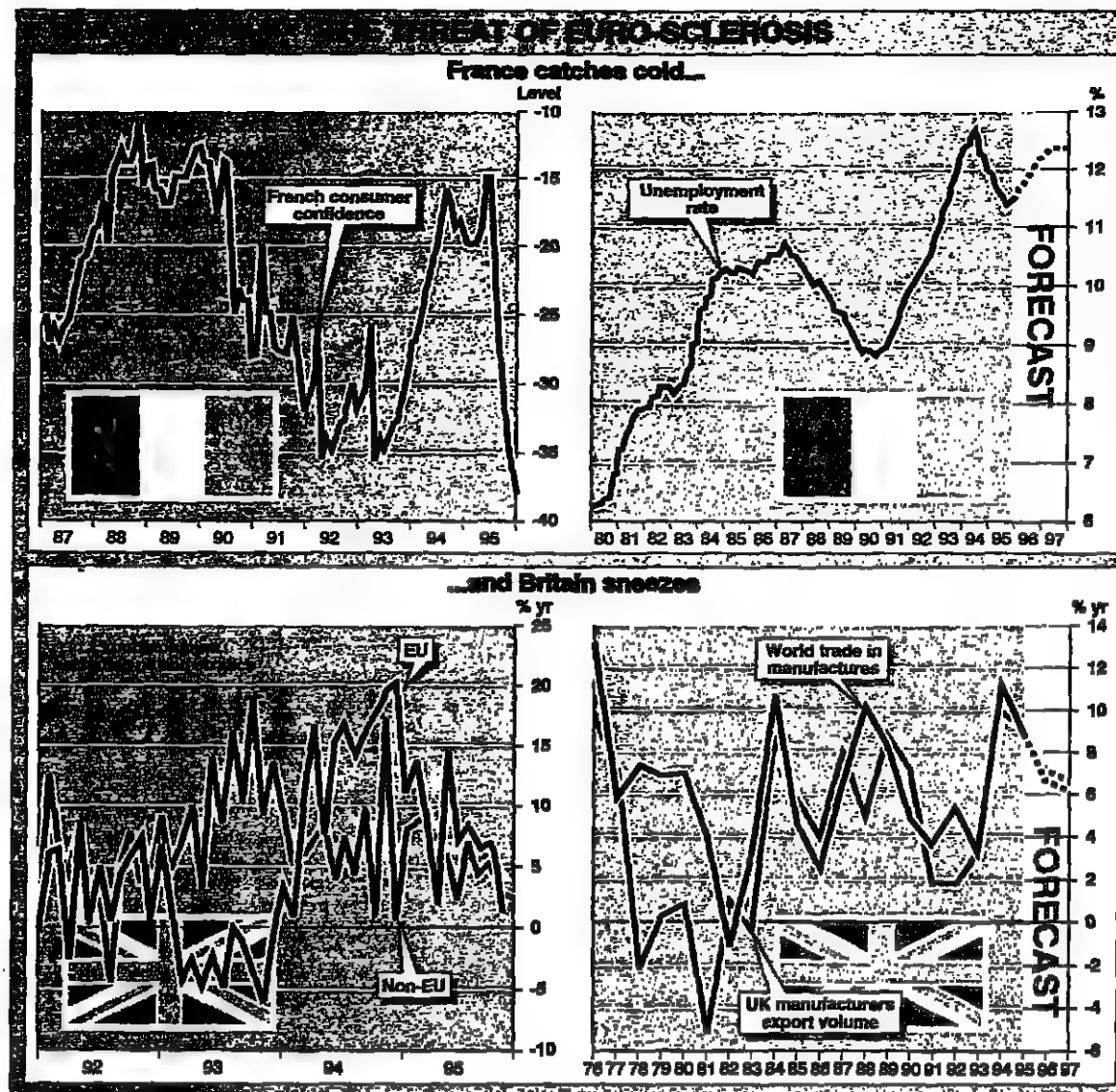
The major problem, as yesterday's trade figures showed, is that exports to Britain's key European export markets are faltering. Exports to Europe fell by 5.2 per cent in October largely because demand from Germany and the Benelux countries was weaker. Exports to Germany fell 6.5 per cent, while exports to the Benelux countries were down 10.4 per cent.

In the current political climate within the Conservative Party, it is understandable that potential prob-



JANET BUSH

Conservatives ignore Europe at their peril



lems emanating from Europe are best brushed under the carpet as the wooing of the electorate begins in earnest. But, sooner or later, Europe will re-enter with a roar from stage left. The inter-governmental conference on plans for European monetary union will probably start in the second half of the year and is a timebomb of which John Major is well aware. What is less recognised is the damaging impact on British exporters of the Maastricht-inspired stranglehold on continental European growth.

This is a Europe-wide phenomenon, but let us take France and Germany which, in recent years, have accounted for about one quarter of British export markets. The signs are ominous. Yesterday, there was news that French consumer confidence had fallen to its lowest level since January 1987. On Tuesday, there was news of a 68,000 surge in German unemployment to 3.79 million and a jump of more than 19 per cent in company insolvencies in October against a year ago.

The DIW Institute — admittedly always on the pessimistic side — predicted German growth of only 1 per cent this year and Helmut Schmidt, a former Chancellor, was moved to characterise Germany as a shackled Gulliver. "If we don't want conditions like in Rome, endless strikes like in Paris, class war like England, or a crippling of public services like the United States, then we must pull ourselves together in 1996," he opined with a tact that must infuriate the Lilliputians with which Germany means to share its destiny.

As Europe struggles to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria by the end of 1997, the risk is that growth will be dampened down to such an extent

that unemployment will rise to even more politically unacceptable levels and that deficits, far from falling, may actually rise in some cases.

Last summer, Mike Dicks, European economist at JP Morgan in London, calculated the size of overall fiscal tightening needed in 14 European countries in order to hit Maastricht's deficit criterion and what the cost would be in growth and unemployment. He estimated that the average fiscal tightening — with no action presumed to be needed in Germany, Denmark, the Irish Republic and The Netherlands — would be equivalent to 1.9 per cent of gross domestic product. Growth, on average, would be cut by 2.6 per cent and unemployment would rise by 0.5 per cent. Germany, for all this week's chest beating, is probably not in bad shape, with most economists predicting a recovery in growth in the second half of this year after a poor first half. The economics team at Lehman Brothers notes that Germany is planning tax cuts later this year for the low paid, a group that has a high marginal propensity to spend, and that domestic demand should also be boosted by higher wages.

France is the major worry. Jean Arthuis, France's Finance Minister, yesterday revised down his forecast for growth last year to 2.6 per cent from 2.9 per cent, but has thus far left his forecast for growth this year unchanged at 2.8 per cent. This is widely expected to be revised downwards, perhaps to 2.5 per cent, but most observers of France believe that this is hopelessly over-optimistic.

Mr Dicks has calculated that France would have to tighten fiscal policy overall by 1.1 per cent. This would cut

growth by 1.2 per cent cumulatively and raise unemployment by 0.2 per cent. He now predicts that France may grow by as little as 1.25 per cent this year and that this could leave France's deficit as a percentage of GDP at 4.75 per cent this year and at 4 per cent in 1997, still above the 3 per cent required under Maastricht. He believes that it might take until 1999 for France to meet the deficit criteria.

There are many other sceptical voices. Julian Jessop, European economist with HSBC Markets, believes growth will amount to no more than 1.6 per cent and that the deficit will overshoot, even if the authorities stick to their guns on current deficit plans and stand firm in spite of rising unemployment. He and others, such as James Capel, see the rate of unemployment rising to 12 per cent this year, from 11.5 per cent in 1995.

French ministers may well decry this pessimism from the Euro-sceptic gnomes of London and they will almost certainly continue to pursue their painful Maastricht programme, destroying growth on the way. Having faced down the strikers, the mood is morose and determined and that means a hard, low growth grind for the foreseeable future.

There seems little hope of a big boost to growth from the US, Japan, or the rest of Europe. Some succour may appear in the form of lower interest rates, but with predictions of a gentle rise in German inflation later this year, the scope does not appear to be great as long as France, and others, remain committed to exchange-rate stability against the mark.

And what of our own scepter isle? If consumer spending is really set to grow by 3.5 per cent, the worry must be that imports will start surging. Exports to key European markets are likely to struggle. No wonder that Messrs Howard, Clarke and Portillo are touting for business across the non-European world stage.

UK exports to Europe dropped 5.2% in October because of weaker demand

Putting the House's pensions in order

An improvement in the scheme for MPs
has been attacked as unwarranted.

Alfred Morris replies to the critics

RECENT reports about the Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund (PCPF) have left some MPs wondering if the fund can really be the one to which they subscribe. The suggestion that a uniform accrual rate of one fiftieth for each year of parliamentary service is "selfish" ignores the fact that any change in the fund's provisions must first be recommended by an independent review body. It is that body, not MPs, that has made the fund's accrual rate a priority for change.

Even so, the fund's managing trustees sought expert and impartial legal advice before accepting the review body's recommendation. That advice emphasised the expertise of the review body, its independence and that its recommendations must be treated by the trustees as reflecting "good current practice in pension schemes... balancing the burden of contributions against the benefit of higher pensions."

To compare the PCPF with the Civil Service scheme is wrongheaded. Not only is the parliamentary scheme a contributory one, it is one in which the member's contribution, at 9 per cent, was for long among the highest of any occupational pension scheme in Britain. This was the price demanded of MPs in 1983, by the then Prime Minister, to offset part of the cost of a review body's award on parliamentary pay.

There was no talk then of the repulsive effects that level of member's contribution would have on others in public service. Listen to some of the "pension experts" and you would think that the pay of civil servants is abated by a "notional" 6 per cent to pay for their pensions. But it is a notion that nobody else now takes seriously, least of all Tony Newton, Leader of the Commons, who told the House when commenting on the parliamentary scheme on July 17: "...there is no getting away from the fact — nor do I seek to disguise it — that this is a Contributory Scheme and that the Civil Service Scheme is not." (Hansard, col 1416).

Since parliamentary pay was for many years linked to that of a Civil Service grade, MPs must effectively have been paying a punitive 15 per cent of gross salary for their pensions when their scheme's contribution rate was 9 per cent.

MPs accepted the imposition of a pension contribution rate which, at the time, was significantly above that needed by their pension fund. The 9 per cent rate was of direct and substantial benefit to the Exchequer and a clear case of manipulating a pension fund at the member's expense — a technique later refined and perfected by others and which has now been legislated against.

"Pension experts" who think that the change proposed by the independent review body will make the PCPF one of the most generous occupational schemes might look as perhaps Lord Nolan would advise at the accrual rate of the judges' pension scheme.

Look at what other legislatures do and you will see that Westminster MPs are anything but profligate when it comes to defending their interests in terms of the accrual rate. It is much the same story as any comparison between MPs' salaries here and in other countries. The most recent league table on parliamentary pay shows the UK in the relegation zone, third from the bottom, about which a leader in *The Times* on November 14, 1995 said: "In the past 30 years, the average real income of Britons has risen by 80 per cent; that of MPs is still the same as it was in 1964. In those days, to go into politics was as attractive an option for ambitious graduates as was the law, the media or business. Now it requires a peculiar self-sacrifice..."

The leader concluded: "British MPs... must be paid a better rate for their job." It might here be added that their pension fund should also be urgently further reviewed, not least to provide a better deal for widows and other dependants of MPs who have died and for retired MPs whose claims have also been strongly and repeatedly pressed with the independent review body by the managing trustees.

To accuse MPs of wrongdoing when no wrong has been done is to undermine those who work to eradicate actual wrongdoing. In this instance it is also to invite those who manage the PCPF to ignore expert and impartial legal advice about their duties and responsibilities.

The Rt Hon Alfred Morris, AO QSO MP, is chairman of the managing trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund.



Morris: "expert advice"

Utilities, regulators and competition on a global scale

From Mr Michael R. Bond
Sir, In the issue of January 3 you refer to the need for the new chief executive of British Telecom to make peace with the regulator. It seems to me that it is the other way around. Far from regulating their respective industries, the regulators are trying to mould them in line with their own vision of how things ought to be and which, in most cases, is very different to the situation created by Parliament when the utilities were privatised.

The good news is that the Labour Party has recognised the need to look critically at the role of the regulators. It is

a pity that the alleged party of business seems no need to do so. Britain needs strong, competitive companies able to build on their home markets and develop into overseas ones as the opportunity arises. Many utilities are trying to do this, but they are not helped by spiteful regulation which changes the rules every time they successfully cope with the last beartrap set for them.

There is a lack of understanding of competition among those not faced with competition in their own fields. The fact is that the utilities are obliged to respond to attempts to steal their

markets by becoming more competitive. Now that the British market is open to all comers, the measure of competition should be on a global scale. As the figures you published before Christmas showed, on a global scale, British companies don't rate. They never will if they are continually being hamstrung by well-meaning members of the salariat every time they respond positively to the challenges put before them.

Yours faithfully
MICHAEL R. BOND,
119 High Street,
Chesterton,
Cambridge.

Housing gloom

From Mr Alan Bardsley,
Sir, Professional commentary on the housing market always seems to be divorced from reality (Halifax forecasts 2 per cent recovery, December 27). Building societies promote, and commentators still endorse, the boom of the 1970s, when house price inflation exceeded borrowing costs.

The implication of a 10 per cent decline in turnover is still that 90 per cent of previous transactions are still going on. The vast majority must be contented and perhaps, with luck, we have lost the speculative element of the market. For the blame, the societies ought to look closer to home.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN BARDSLEY,
Cartref, Church Lane,
Gawsworth, Macclesfield,
Cheshire.

Stock Exchange board shows signs of being Luddite

From Mr R. D. Bushrod
Sir, Stock Exchange Luddites. After the forced resignation of Michael Lawrence I wonder how many London Stock Exchange board members will reflect on dinner conversations when, undoubtedly, they held forth on the need for the dockers, the miners, the printers and the employees in general to face up to needs of

a modern economy? What happened to those groups which were accused of ignoring reality and putting self-interest before the needs

of their industry, I wonder? Yours faithfully,
R.D. BUSHROD,
Beach Cottage, Lidwells Lane,
Goudhurst, Kent.

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Ingham chief executive resigns

Alan Stephenson has resigned as chief executive of Ingham, the troubled mini-conglomerate that incurred a pre-tax loss of £107 million for the six months to September 30.

The company, which earned £867,000 before tax in the first half of the previous year, announced the sale of its loss-making worsted spinning business for a nominal sum. The sale will leave Ingham to focus on its UK classic car parts business.

Mr Stephenson, who became chief executive in August 1994, will remain a non-executive director. Ingham intends to recommend proposals by potential investors, represented by SBC Warburg, which would involve a share subscription and a related pre-emptive invitation to existing shareholders at 36p a share.

Interim losses were 6.6p a share, compared with earnings of 3.2p. There is no interim payout (1.75p).

Ryland up

Ryland Group, the motor distribution and contract hire group, increased pre-tax profits to £1.55 million from £1.15 million in the half-year to October 31, on turnover that rose to £154.8 million from £118.1 million. Earnings were 3.55p a share (3.42p). There is an interim dividend of 1.17p a share (0.27p).

Society loan

Northern Rock Building Society has completed its biggest syndicated loan. As co-arranger with Banque Paribas, the society is lending £39 million of an £89 million total loan to fund the transfer of more than 5,000 homes from Rushmore District Council to Rushmore Housing Association in Hampshire.

Bell sells

Bell Cablemedia, the UK cable group, has sold its dormant Worcester franchise to TeleWest for £9.8 million. BCM Worcester holds the cable licences in an area next to TeleWest's Midlands franchise.



A shortage of suitable sites for new stores has forced Basil Taylor, chief executive, to seek new areas for expansion of the rapidly growing business

M&W steps up security as shop crime increases

BY MARTIN BARROW

M&W, the convenience store operator, said that the level of retail crime has become a major concern. The company also complained of "a marked unwillingness" to prosecute or deal effectively with shoplifters.

Basil Taylor, chief executive, said: "Even more worryingly we have noticed increased levels of violent crime, often involving relatively small sums of money."

The company has consequently needed to invest heavily in increasingly sophisticated security systems involving video surveillance, alarms and time delay devices and we have taken all practicable security measures to protect our customers, our staff and our stores."

M&W, which is based in Southampton, has grown rapidly and now operates 163 outlets, principally in southern England. However, a shortage of suitable sites for new stores has prompted the

company to consider other areas.

M&W yesterday reported profits of £2.66 million before tax for the year to October 1, against £2.61 million in the previous 12 months. Michael Weston, chairman, said competition remained strong, with other retailers opening longer hours in the hope of increasing market share. M&W lifted like-for-like sales by 2.64 per cent, excluding lottery sales.

Mr Taylor said the impact of the National Lottery on operating profits had been broadly neutral. About one-half of the company's stores are agents for the lottery and sell scratchcards, and these had benefited from an increase in customer flows. But this had been offset by a decline in business at stores that did not offer the lottery.

Earnings rose to 10.89p a share from 10.64p. There is a final dividend of 2.25p, making 3.5p (3.25p).

Troubled Rexam appoints two outsiders to top posts

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

REXAM, the troubled printing and packaging company formerly known as Bowater, has appointed two outsiders as chairman and chief executive.

Jeremy Lancaster, at present the chairman and chief executive of Wolsley, the building materials group, will become chairman in May when Mike Woodhouse retires. However, he will join the board immediately as vice-chairman.

Rolf Bjorjesson, chief executive of PLM, the Swedish packaging company, will succeed David Lyon as managing director and chief executive in July. Mr Lyon will continue as a director for an additional 12 months.

The City was pleased with the appointments, which end 18 months of uncertainty over the succession. Rexam's share price rose 2p to close at 382p. Mr Woodhouse said: "Togeth-

er, these appointments offer the prospect of a most exciting and fulfilling future for Rexam, its employees, and shareholders."

Rexam has lost 40 per cent of its market value in the past six months after two profit warnings in the autumn. The 1995 figures are expected to be 20 per cent below 1994.

The collapse in the share price cost Rexam its place in

the FT-SE 100 and has made it a potential bid target. The recent rise in the share price, from a low of 327p in December, has been fuelled by market rumours of a takeover. However, Alusuisse, the Swiss metals and packaging company at the centre of many of the rumours, has publicly denied any interest in Rexam.

The new management will face a difficult task in rebuilding

Rexam's share price to a sufficient level to ward off bid threats from companies that see it as a cheap way into the high-margin paper and packaging business. But customer destocking, one of the main factors behind Rexam's decline last year, seems to be slowing and analysts expect an improvement in 1996.

Mr Lancaster, 59, who is also a non-executive director

of Tomlinsons and Kleinwort Benson Group, has been head of Wolsley since 1976. Last year, the group posted record profits of £245 million on turnover of £3.7 billion. Mr Bjorjesson, 53, has been chief executive of PLM since 1987. PLM is owned by Industrivärden, the Swedish investment group, and is to be floated soon at a market value of about £300 million.

Weir wins £20m Chinese power order

WEIR Group, the Glasgow engineer, has won an order worth nearly £20 million to supply the main pumps and valves to the Qianshan nuclear power station near Shanghai (Martin Barrow writes).

It is the group's largest ever single order from the power industry and gives Weir a

further foothold in the Chinese market. Weir Pumps, the company's biggest subsidiary, is to make almost all the pumps for the 1200Mw pressurised water reactor (PWR) plant being built under phase two of the development. Hopkinson, the valve-maker, will provide cooling-water, butterfly

valves and main steam-isolation valves.

Design work starts this year and the equipment will appear on-site in 1998. The plant is being built by the China Nuclear Energy Industry Corporation. The deal was secured against international competition and a Chinese de-

legation visited Sizewell B in Suffolk to assess performance of Weir equipment in a PWR.

To help to secure the order Weir arranged a £30 million loan through Standard Chartered Bank, backed by the Export Credit Guarantee Department, to help to finance the deal.

Vibroplant quits US with sale of American Hi-Lift

BY PHILIP PANGLOSS

VIBROPLANT, the specialist plant hire group, is making an exit from the United States with the disposal of its American Hi-Lift subsidiary to Primeco Inc in a deal worth about \$68.8 million.

American Hi-Lift, which specialises in the sale and hire of aerial lift equipment, is being sold for \$46.5 million. However, Primeco has also agreed to discharge American Hi-Lift's bank debt of about \$22.3 million.

The disposal news helped shares in Vibroplant, which was only capitalised at £34.2 million prior to the US sale news, buck the gloomy market trend with a 7p rise to 81p.

The deal is conditional on shareholder approval, an environmental audit to be carried out by Primeco and US government approval under US anti-trust legislation.

Jeremy Pilkington, Vibroplant's chairman and chief executive, said the good sale

price achieved was helped by "a good strong shortlist of interested parties". The proceeds from the US sale will be used to wipe out Vibroplant's borrowings, leaving the group with about £20 million net cash to fund future growth.

The Hi-Lift business, which has 18 branches across the US, made pre-tax profits of £2.3 million in the six months to September 30, on turnover of £15.4 million but only £1.4 million pre-tax profits in the year to March 31. It had net assets of £20.3 million at the last year end on March 31.

Mr Pilkington, whose family controls 51.3 per cent of Vibroplant's equity, said: "The consideration realised for American Hi-Lift represents a significant premium over net assets. The proceeds from the sale will enable the company to focus on growth opportunities in the UK."

Tempus, page 26

Costing liability in a new light

Nick Atkins looks at a judgment with far-reaching implications for auditors of company accounts

Last month's £65 million award of damages, the highest against a UK firm of chartered accountants, sent a shiver through the profession. The damages were awarded to ADT Limited after it relied on accounts audited by Binder Hamlyn in making an agreed bid for Britannia Security Group in February 1990.

The judgment, which is under appeal, brought into stark relief why it is that firms intend to cap the present unlimited liability of partners by incorporating or creating limited liability partnerships in Jersey. The ruling demonstrates how easily auditors can lose the protection from negligence suits afforded them by the landmark case of *Caparo Industries v Dickman*.

In 1990, the House of Lords stated in *Caparo* that auditors owe a duty to the company they are auditing and generally not to third parties. How then was ADT, which was not Binder Hamlyn's client, able to recover damages from the auditors of the company that it acquired?

Early in October 1989, ADT began negotiations with BSG, a security alarm business, about a possible agreed bid. At

the end of that month, Binder Hamlyn signed the audit certificate for BSG's accounts for the year to June 30, 1989. By Christmas 1989 agreement in principle had been reached for ADT to acquire BSG. However, ADT's chairman insisted that there should be a meeting with BSG's auditors before a formal bid was made.

On January 5, 1990, the Binder Hamlyn audit partner was telephoned by BSG and asked (as a service to his client) to attend a meeting that afternoon with a representative of ADT. Binder Hamlyn had not been involved in any of BSG's negotiations with ADT.

During the 45-minute meeting, the audit partner was asked by ADT what turned out to be two critical questions. First, did he "stand by the 1989 accounts"? Second, was there anything else which ADT should be told? The partner answered "yes" and "no".

Thereafter, ADT formally made its bid and acquired BSG. ADT then discovered that the financial position of BSG was not as it expected. In 1992, ADT launched its claim, accusing Binder Hamlyn of negligent auditing.

The High Court ruled last



Nick Atkins warns auditors against complacency

month that because of the audit partner's answers to ADT's two questions Binder Hamlyn could not rely on *Caparo* to defeat the claim. Knowing that ADT intended to acquire BSG, Binder Hamlyn had told ADT directly that they stood by BSG's

audited accounts and in doing so assumed a legal responsibility to ADT for the accuracy and competence of their audit.

The court decided that Binder Hamlyn's audit had been negligent and that ADT was entitled to compensation. Damages were assessed as the

difference between the price paid by ADT (£105 million) and the notional price that someone knowing of the audit deficiencies would have been prepared to pay for BSG (£40 million).

Subject to the outcome of Binder Hamlyn's appeal, the lessons for auditors are all too clear. The decision will certainly end any complacency over *Caparo* ending the threat of auditors being required to pick up the whole tab when a purchaser claims it relied on negligently audited accounts.

As Binder Hamlyn found to its great cost, it is all too easy for an auditor to be held to have assumed a legal responsibility to a third party for his audit.

If asked about audited accounts by a third party, the safe courses are to decline to say anything or to issue a clear disclaimer of liability before answering. It would also be wise for the response to be recorded, preferably in a letter to the third party.

That said, in the real world, a purchaser may well insist on a direct assurance from the auditor of the target company before going ahead. The auditor is likely to be under pressure by his client to give the assurance. Further claims against auditors by disappointed purchasers are inevitable.

The author is a partner in Lovell White Durrant

Seeking a reasonable inside check on fraud

IT IS ironic. For years, company directors have berated auditors for not taking specific responsibility for detecting fraud. The auditors have wriggled on the hook. They know that if they said that fraud detection was one of their duties then every time a company suffered from fraud it would be the auditors, yet again, who would be sued.

If directors were so worried about fraud, one would presume they would have installed systems to combat its likelihood. Not so. A survey by Ernst & Young of the UK top 500 companies showed that "almost 40 per cent of the companies interviewed have no in-house internal audit function".

Small wonder that Ian Plaistowe, chairman of the Auditing Practices Board, was so ebullient earlier this week when he unveiled analysis of the responses the board received to its most recent paper. This had discussed the effectiveness of internal financial controls and had followed in the wake of the APB's guidance. In the words of Philip Ashton of Price Waterhouse, who is now in charge of the APB's internal control efforts, this had gone "within a whisker of insisting directors had to report on the effectiveness of internal controls".

The responses show that this panicked directors up and down the country. "It is a great step forward," Plaistowe said. "Companies are now making sure they have effective internal controls." This is a remarkable statement. It must have seemed obvious that in a sophisticated corporate environment companies would have pretty effective systems for ensuring that everything was working properly. But they did not.

A simple suggestion that directors should state in their report and accounts to shareholders that they have an effective system of internal financial controls has resulted in corporate worlds being turned upside down. The picture is one of company chairmen phoning finance directors to ask about the health of the internal audit department only to find the last tranche of delayering they ordered had abolished it.

Now, the important issue is the definition of "effective" and quite how wide is the whisker that Ashton talked about. This could take time. Far better to try another track. And that is what the APB is seeking to do. Plaistowe argued that to ask auditors to report on how "effective" a system of internal

control was would only create another expectations gap. Auditors would certify one system effective and then find that it broke down a week after the year-end. They would get sued again. Auditors are tired of being sued and will try to avoid it at all costs.

So a wording has been created and the hopes are that it will become best practice. The example the APB put forward is that used by the BOC Group. In a lengthy section in the directors' report the system of internal control is outlined and the areas to which it applies detailed. The directors then state that the system provides "reasonable but not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions are authorised and recorded properly and that material errors and irregularities are either prevented or would be detected within a timely period".

The latest accounts of Hanson provide another variant. The section on internal financial control concludes with the sentence: "Internal financial control, by its nature, provides only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss."

The key is the phrase "reasonable and not absolute". This formula is seen as the one which is likely to provide a way forward. It will keep directors on the straight and narrow without forcing them to say something definitive which they might regret. And it allows auditors to review the systems, but not have to give any authoritative ruling. In the words of Plaistowe: "We rather like the look of it."

If the idea takes off, the boot may well be on the other foot when it comes to auditors, who are still reluctant to commit themselves. Of the 13 accounting firms that responded to the discussion paper, only Touche Ross was deemed to be "supportive of auditors' attestation on effectiveness". Eight were opposed. But companies that are taking the "reasonable but not absolute" route will decide that if they have done the work then auditors should provide the other side of the bargain. Talking to Tony Isaac, finance director, it became obvious that this was an objective. "I don't have a problem with the auditors commenting on internal control," he said. As far as he could see, it was now the auditors who had problems. And that was down to what he called "the litigation cloud over the whole profession".



ROBERT BRUCE

This lady's ready for returning

IT IS the season for in-fighting and skulduggery at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. Nominations for the election of the next vice-president were fought over at last weekend's council conference. The likely hats in the ring are the thoroughly decent sole practitioner, Michael Groom, the ebullient and substantial figure of BDO Stoy Hayward partner, Chris Swinson, and the austere Sheila Masters of

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

More thoughts

THE retirement from Coopers & Lybrand of insolvency guru, David Graham QC, has not meant an end to his interest in the more unsavoury aspects of financial behaviour. He is researching a history of insolvency law. In the latest issue of Coopers' journal, *Phoenix*, he has provided some nuggets. In particular, Thomas More's account in 1513 of the abuse of the law of sanctuary. Church-

es gave sanctuary but found that "malicious heinous traitors" ran to them with other people's money and goods and spent the lot having "bidden their creditors goe whistle them". And they say things have changed.

Name game

THE ICA council conference made progress on regulating the profession. But it has name problems. Given regulators are

now "Ofthis" or "Ofthat" they want to know which is the least worst of "Office of Professional Standards" or "Professional Standards Office".

Unplanned lunch

EVEN printing gremlins are becoming cynical these days. In my column last week, I appeared to have suggested that senior partners should offer clients "the benefit of a present lunch". This should have read "a present lunch". Though come to think of it...

ROBERT BRUCE

king a reasonable
de check on fraud

[illegible]

London follows Wall Street lower

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099	2100	2101	2102	2103	2104	2105	2106	2107	2108	2109	2110	2111	2112	2113	2114	2115	2116	2117	2118	2119	2120	2121	2122	2123	2124	2125	2126	2127	2128	2129	2130	2131	2132	2133	2134	2135	2136	2137	2138	2139	2140	2141	2142	2143	2144	2145	2146	2147	2148	2149	2150	2151	2152	2153	2154	2155	2156	2157	2158	2159	2160	2161	2162	2163	2164	2165	2166	2167	2168	2169	2170	2171	2172	2173	2174	2175	2176	2177	2178	2179	2180	2181	2182	2183	2184	2185	2186	2187	2188	2189	2190	2191	2192	2193	2194	2195	2196	2197	2198	2199	2200	2201	2202	2203	2204	2205	2206	2207	2208	2209	2210	2211	2212	2213	2214	2215	2216	2217	2218	2219	2220	2221	2222	2223	2224	2225	2226	2227	2228	2229	2230	2231	2232	2233	2234	2235	2236	2237	2238	2239	2240	2241	2242	2243	2244	2245	2246	2247	2248	2249	2250	2251	2252	2253	2254	2255	2256	2257	2258	2259	2260	2261	2262	2263	2264	2265	2266	2267	2268	2269	2270	2271	2272	2273	2274	2275	2276	2277	2278	2279	2280	2281	2282	2283	2284	2285	2286	2287	2288	2289	2290	2291	2292	2293	2294	2295	2296	2297	2298	2299	2300	2301	2302	2303	2304	2305	2306	2307	2308	2309	2310	2311	2312	2313	2314	2315	2316	2317	2318	2319	2320	2321	2322	2323	2324	2325	2326	2327	2328	2329	2330	2331	2332	2333	2334	2335	2336	2337	2338	2339	2340	2341	2342	2343	2344	2345	2346	2347	2348	2349	2350	2351	2352	2353	2354	2355	2356	2357	2358	2359	2360	2361	2362	2363	2364	2365	2366	2367	2368	2369	2370	2371	2372	2373	2374	2375	2376	2377	2378	2379	2380	2381	2382	2383	2384	2385	2386	2387	2388	2389	2390	2391	2392	2393	2394	2395	2396	2397	2398	2399	2400	2401	2402	2403	2404	2405	2406	2407	2408	2409	2410	2411	2412	2413	2414	2415	2416	2417	2418	2419	2420	2421	2422	2423	2424	2425	2426	2427	2428	2429	2430	2431	2432	2433	2434	2435	2436	2437	2438	2439	2440	2441	2442	2443	2444	2445	2446	2447	2448	2449	2450	2451	2452	2453	2454	2455	2456	2457	2458	2459	2460	2461	2462	2463	2464	2465	2466	2467	2468	2469	2470	2471	2472	2473	2474	2475	2476	2477	2478	2479	2480	2481	2482	2483	2484	2485	2486	2487	2488	2489	2490	2491	2492	2493	2494	2495	2496	2497	2498	2499	2500	2501	2502	2503	2504	2505	2506	2507	2508	2509	2510	2511	2512	2513	2514	2515	2516	2517	2518	2519	2520	2521	2522	2523	2524	2525	2526	2527	2528	2529	2530	2531	2532	2533	2534	2535	2536	2537	2538	2539	2540	2541	2542	2543	2544	2545	2546	2547	2548	2549	2550	2551	2552	2553	2554	2555	2556	2557	2558	2559	2560	2561	2562	2563	2564	2565	2566	2567	2568	2569	2570	2571	2572	2573	2574	2575	2576	2577	2578	2579	2580	2581	2582	2583	2584	2585	2586	2587	2588	2589	2590	2591	2592	2593	2594	2595	2596	2597	2598	2599	2600	2601	2602	2603	2604	2605	2606	2607	2608	2609	2610	2611	2612	2613	2614	2615	2616	2617	2618	2619	2620	2621	2622	2623	2624	2625	2626	2627	2628	2629	2630	2631	2632	2633	2634	2635	2636	2637	2638	2639	2640	2641	2642	2643	2644	2645	2646	2647	2648	2649	2650	2651	2652	2653	2654	2655	2656	2657	2658	2659	2660	2661	2662	2663	2664	2665	2666	2667	2668	2669	2670	2671	2672	2673	2674	2675	2676	2677	2678	2679	2680	2681	2682	2683	2684	2685	2686	2687	2688	2689	2690	2691	2692	2693	2694	2695	2696	2697	2698	2699	2700	2701	2702	2703	2704	2705	2706	2707	2708	2709	2710	2711	2712	2713	2714	2715	2716	2717	2718	2719	2720	2721	2722	2723	2724	2725	2726	2727	2728	2729	2730	2731	2732	2733	2734	2735	2736	2737	2738	2739	2740	2741	2742	2743	2744	2745	2746	2747	2748	2749	2750	2751	2752	2753	2754	2755	2756	2757	2758	2759	2760	2761	2762	2763	2764	2765	2766	2767	2768	2769	2770	2771	2772	2773	2774	2775	2776	2777	2778	2779	2780	2781	2782	2783	2784	2785	2786	2787	2788	2789	2790	2791	2792	2793	2794	2795	2796	2797	2798	2799	2800	2801	2802	2803	2804	2805	2806	2807	2808	2809	2810	2811	2812	2813	2814	2815	2816	2817	2818	2819	2820	2821	2822	2823	2824	2825	2826	2827	2828	2829	2830	2831	2832	2833	2834	2835	2836	2837	2838	2839	2840	2841	2842	2843	2844	2845	2846	2847	2848	2849	2850	2851	2852	2853	2854	2855	2856	2857	2858	2859	2860	2861	2862	2863	2864	2865	2866	2867	2868	2869	2870	2871	2872	2873	2874	2875	2876	2877	2878	2879	2880	2881	2882	2883	2884	2885	2886	2887	2888	2889	2890	2891	2892	2893	2894	2895	2896	2897	2898	2899	2900	2901	2902	2903	2904	2905	2906	2907	2908	2909	2910	2911	2912	2913	2914	2915	2916	2917	2918	2919	2920	2921	2922	2923	2924	2925	2926	2927	2928	2929	2930	2931	2932	2933	2934	2935	2936	2937	2938	2939	2940	2941	2942	2943	2944	2945	2946	2947	2948	2949	2950	2951	2952	2953	2954	2955	2956	2957	2958	2959	2960	2961	2962	2963	2964	2965	2966	2967	2968	2969	2970	2971	2972	2973	2974	2975	2976	2977	2978	2979	2980	2981	2982	2983	2984	2985	2986	2987	2988	2989	2990	2991	2992	2993	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■ FILM 1

Paul Verhoeven's flesh-filled *Showgirls* proves to be a tacky and pointless folly



■ FILM 2

... but Carl Franklin's *Devil in a Blue Dress* is an evocative thriller set in 1940s Los Angeles

THE TIMES
ARTS

■ FILM 3

In the overblown *The War*, Kevin Costner plays the Vietnam vet drawn into battles closer to home



■ FILM 4

... while *The Run of the Country*, with Albert Finney, is a woolly tale of Irish romance

CINEMA: Geoff Brown makes his excuses and leaves as the *Showgirls* show how unsexy wall-to-wall nudity can be

This too, too sullied flesh

Hollywood lunacy scaled a new peak back in November 1992 when Charles Evans, a producer, property developer and co-founder of a sportswear empire, paid \$2 million—in cash, no less—for the kernel of a film called *Showgirls*. No script existed, but there was an idea burning inside the head of Joe Eszterhas, the town's most expensive scribe, which he outlined to Evans in a reported four minutes. No stars were attached to his notion of a raunchy rock musical set in Las Vegas, but there was a hope—just a hope—that Paul Verhoeven, Eszterhas's director on *Basic Instinct*, might be interested.

Last year Hollywood lunacy scaled an even greater peak when the film was unveiled, almost proudly, with an NC-17 certificate: the first mainstream product to be widely released with the adult rating most American producers fight desperately to avoid. For what had that money, and that controversy, bought? Just a hoary yarn, as old as *42nd Street* or *A Star is Born*, about a hot, grasping girl called Nomi, played by Elizabeth Berkley, an actress plucked from nowhere, to which she will probably return.

Nomi begins as a lowly stripper. She has sex in a pool with Kyle MacLachlan, the Diaghilev of Las Vegas, toys vaguely with lesbian affections, and encourages Gina Gershon, the town's reigning diva, to fracture a hip by falling down stairs. By the end, of course, she is the Strip's main attraction, spewing out of a volcano in a tasteful show called *Goddess*.

Verhoeven's treatment only makes the crude storyline, limping drama and threadbare characters worse. No shred of subtlety clings to his images. He is out to ogle flesh. There is plenty of razzmatazz and gold lame, but no heart, not even a faint erotic tingle as Nomi, like all the showgirls, uses her body as a commodity. This is also the film-makers'

Showgirls
Odeon West End
18, 131 mins
Miserable garish folly
Devil in a Blue Dress
Curzon West End
15, 101 mins
Atmospheric thriller
The War
Empire 2, 12, 125 mins
Stimulating fable with Kevin Costner and kids
The Run of the Country
Odeon Haymarket
15, 109 mins
Faded blarney with Albert Finney

approach: and it seems particularly mean of the script to single out a fictional rock star, one Andrew Carver, as Las Vegas's brute male when the species overflows on both sides of the camera.

"This picture," Eszterhas trilled in the pages of *Variety*, "will absolutely be on the cutting edge of contemporary musicals." But even as a musical *Showgirls* fails. David Stewart, late of the Eurythmics, presides over a soundtrack that punnels the ears without benefit, while the dance moves, mixed in with much writhing and fondling, are too repetitive and absurd to make the screen shake.

All told *Showgirls* is a miserable folly: a strenuous attempt at a big, bold movie that both bores your brain and numbs your feelings. If you stay the course until the final credits, you will be informed that "Animal action was monitored by the American Humane Association. No animal was harmed in the making of this film." Cheering news, I suppose, but what about the humans who watch it?

At times in *Devil in a Blue Dress*, a superbly atmospheric adaptation of Walter Mosley's crime novel, you also feel your sensibilities under attack. A character like Mouse, sidekick to Denzel Washington's

amateur detective Easy Rawlins, is a trigger-happy psychotic yet, in the hands of actor Don Cheadle, his portrayal is light and sympathetic. Should we really find this human keg of dynamite so amusing?

Carl Franklin's film, a belated successor to his excellent first feature *One False Move*, has other trouble spots. Such as Jennifer Beals, the devil in a blue dress herself. A femme fatale should have some magnetic allure, but Beals's weak performance as Daphne Monet, the white girl and politician's friend that Easy is hired to find, suggests someone who would have difficulties attracting a fly.

Since Daphne lies at the mystery's centre, the damage is not insignificant. But so much else in the film is beautifully realised. Franklin and production designer Gary Frunkoff evoke the time and place—1940s Los Angeles—with a loving care that never degenerates into a fussy accretion of period props. Tak Fujimoto's camera roams the manicured lawns, basks in the glaring sun, and dives into bustling night spots.

Rawlins is a GI who faces mortgage problems when he loses his job in an aircraft factory. Offered \$100 to locate Monet, he jumps to it, only to find corpses, police and politicians collecting round his feet.

Helped by Washington's wary performance as the ordinary Joe plunged into deep water, Franklin finds much quirky humour in the tale. But this is always entertainment with a thoughtful undertow. Easy's search for Daphne takes him across LA's class and ethnic barriers, yet the film still gives the impression of unfolding in a golden age, before urban decay took hold.

After cooking up *Fried Green Tomatoes*, producer-turned-director Jon Avnet has found a few more scraps of Southern charm to put into *The War*. They do not make a very nourishing meal.

The time is 1970, the place Mississippi. Family man Kevin Costner has returned from Vietnam with some vi-



Gina Gershon and Elizabeth Berkley in *Showgirls*, a "strenuous attempt at a big, bold movie that bores your brain and numbs your feelings"

cious chest stitches and signs of mental trauma. He keeps losing jobs but, as he blandly tells his son Elijah Wood, "so long as we got hope, there's always a chance".

There's always a Southern accent, too. Costner's is ill-suited, but it is more understandable than some of the children's. And it is on the children that the film's story ultimately rests. Young Wood, impressive as usual, leads the offspring in building a tree house, which comes under attack from a family of louts. Another war, therefore, is fought alongside Costner's tortured memories of Vietnam, and one that grows to preposterous dimensions. Avnet and his players manage a few affecting moments, but so much here is overblown, like the new, racist schoolteacher in her bright pink dress. She exists in the script only to be

knocked down. What did you do in *The War*, Daddy? I groaned, my pet, and looked at my watch.

Much the same happened with *The Run of the Country*, a tepid and woolly-headed Irish drama from the pen of Shane Connaughton, author of *My Left Foot*. Let the production notes explain: "The Run of the Country is a story of love: love between a boy and a girl, between father and son, and love for Ireland." Abstract ideas outnumber dynamic events by about ten to one, and you almost despair of getting involved in the comings and goings of 17-year-old Danny, his wild chum Prunty, and the girl just north of the border who wins Danny's heart.

Despite passing references to the Troubles, the IRA and

the SAS, time seems to have passed this film by. Life goes on as it might have in the 1950s, and the stale feeling is enhanced by Albert Finney, playing his third movie Irishman in three years. As the stern, widowed Garda sergeant struggling with a teenage son, Finney lends some much-needed force to a drooping film. But his acting in capital letters, and it scarcely boosts an authenticity already imperilled by the casting of an earnest, picture-postcard American, Matt Keeslar, as Danny.

The landscapes, at least, are the genuine article, and the director makes the most of them. His name? Peter Yates, lurking somewhat in a bizarre transatlantic career that has already encompassed the Royal Court Theatre, *Bullitt*, Cliff Richard, Tom Selleck and Cher. Whatever next?

CONCERTS: Joan Rodgers excels in a memorable vocal series; and a fine choir delves into 16th-century rarities

A Russian debt paid in full

"TICK tick, tick tick, went Britten's piano accompaniment to Pushkin's poem, *Lines written during a sleepless night*. Then, suddenly and quietly, a faint chiming began, as Pushkin's own clock joined in, striking midnight and, it seemed, even more, until the song had ended."

This anecdote, recalled by Peter Pears in the journal he kept during his visit with

Benjamin Britten to Pushkin's birthplace in 1965, has become a little emblem of the composer's relationship with Russia, the subject of the penultimate evening in the Wigmore Hall's revelatory Britten Song Series, which began last September.

Britten's songcycle *The Poet's Echo* bounced back more truly than either Pears or Britten could have expected. The empathy felt by the composer for the poet's words still resonates through some of the most intensely concentrated

music he was to write for the human voice. Joan Rodgers eloquently recreated the passion and the pain of the ignored artist in the cycle.

To hear Rodgers in the Russian song repertoire which framed the Britten was to enjoy a sophisticated, highly intelligent and flawlessly artistic presentation of a literature deep under her linguistic skin. The Mussorgsky cycle, *The Nursery*, was sung with bright-eyed but discreet characterisation. This was a Russian storybook read in an essentially English nursery, like Tchaikovsky, too, came to life, as vivid, heightened speech, the words of *At the Ball* dancing gladly through the line with Malcolm Martineau's piano playing, and the modal contours of *Was I not a little blade of grass* as full and free as unaccompanied folk song.

The first programme in the Tallis Scholars' mini-series at St John's, Smith Square (three concerts in as many months), focused on the music of John Sheppard, presenting his *Cantata Mass* alongside works by two other 16th-century English composers: Robert White and Thomas Tallis.

The most remarkable thing about the Tallis Scholars is their consistency, both in the standard of performance and in the overall sound they produce, even when, as on this occasion, there were some changes in personnel. So high is that standard, the smallest blemish—and there were a few fluffed entries here—makes a disproportionate impact.

Although the group is well

Benjamin Britten Song Series
Wigmore Hall

Britten's realisation of *Mad Bess*, Purcell's own compassionate, tragicomic reflection on deranged humanity, began Rodgers's recital. The song bounced its own echoes off another Britten-Purcell realisation from the early evening concert, when Richard Jackson had given a wordily performance of *I'll sail upon a Dog-star*. Jackson was joined by tenor Adrian Thompson, counter-tenor Michael Chance and pianist Julius Drake for a re-creation of a 1971 Aldeburgh Festival concert which presented Britten's fourth canticle, *Journey of the Magi*.

The original quartet of James Bowman, Pears, John

Shirley-Quirk and Britten was, of course, something of a hard act to follow both for Tuesday's singers and for those of us in the audience who saved up their holiday money to buy a student ticket for the great occasion 25 years ago.

But some of the same thrill remained: the chill of those ice-glazed repetitions of the "cold coming" in the voices' close harmony; the hallucinatory quality of the night journey to the birth which was to be a death; the tug of Britten's taut notes against Eliot's sturdy words.

The fourth canticle was matched by Britten's second, *Abraham and Isaac*, given powerful dramatic presence by Chance and Thompson; and framed by two *Mörke Lieder* of Hugo Wolf and a lilting, vaudeville *Die ziele Christi* by Heinrich Schütz, following on from the canticle without a break, just as it had done in Aldeburgh.

HILARY FINCH

Sheppard leads the way

Tallis Scholars
St John's

known for its recording of music by continental composers such as Josquin and Palestrina, its sound is perhaps most readily associated with English sacred polyphony, and notably those stratospheric lines (beautifully sung by Deborah Roberts and Ruth Holton).

This was certainly the case in the Sheppard mass setting, although there were quite extended passages for the lower voices alone, in which the equally excellent basses Francis Steele and Donald Greig shone. On first hearing, the *Missa Cantata* is clearly a fine piece, but the perfor-

mance seemed at times tentative.

The singers were clearly at home with Tallis's *Lamentations* (thought to have been composed early in the reign of Elizabeth I), and gave a magisterial account of them. That Sheppard was capable of composing in a direct, expressive vein was clear from his poignant setting of *In Manus Tuas*, while White's extended account of the *Miserere* confirmed that in England, as on the Continent, penitential texts drew something very special from composers of church music in the Renaissance.

There is more Sheppard. White, Tallis, Tye, Parsons, Mundy, Fayrfax and Cornysh later in the season.

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CHOICE 1

Sir Peter Hall recruits a star for Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*

VENUE: In preview, Theatre Royal, Haymarket

CHOICE 2

Elgar Howarth directs Britwistle's *Panic*, the Proms sensation

VENUE: Tonight at the Queen Elizabeth Hall

THE ARTS

CHOICE 3

... while Mark Elder conducts the CBO in English music

VENUE: Symphony Hall, Birmingham, tonight

YOUNG ARTS

Children learn something of the elegant craft of bookbinding from the experts at the British Library

Books bound for glory



Girls from Sarum Hall, Hampshire, at the British Library: the library's own bindery takes a month to make a book; the girls had 45 minutes

At the British Library, Hilary Finch joins a group of children in a lesson on the ancient art of bookbinding

Curiouser and curiouser. There I was, hunting for the autograph manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, surrounded on all sides by George III's collection of 60,000 leather-covered, gold-tooled and monogrammed books in the King's Library, when suddenly a panel of books slid aside to reveal a tiny wooden door. Behind it crouched a narrow, dark corridor, more and still more marmalade — no, surely! And a bubbling fragrance of coffee, the smell of freshly sharpened pencils, of old and crackling paper...

If the New Building at St Pancras should ever open, the British Library's Education Service will surely mount the loss of its secret rabbit warren. But for at least another year it is safe, says Karen Brookfield and Kate Barnes, the eager emissaries of the written and printed word, since 1991, have been celebrating his history and artistry with parties of children from all over London. This morning they were preparing to welcome a group of eight-year-olds in from Sarum Hall School in Hampshire to one of their primary school workshops.

Not long ago, the sedate King's Library was transformed into a drama space for a play about Yaghi, the 13th-century Islamic calligrapher; but today the focus was on the books themselves — the making, the binding, the decorating, the illuminating. Another shelf of books rolled away and another little room glowed out of the warren. A long table busy with baskets of needles and thread, bulldog clips, strips and sheets of coloured paper, cork tiles, in the British Library's own bindery, it takes a month to make a book. Sarum Hall had 45 minutes, and that included time for the unangling of the mathematical conundrum of spacing the holes and numbering the pages; an impenetrable puzzle in which 4 faces 1 on Side A, and 2 faces 3 on Side B, and the pattern of 5, 4, 8, 1 and 3, 6, 2, 7 is called a quarto.

But first the folding. Professional binders do not use their hands but a bone rule. A tricky one, this, especially for Hampshire. "Hands up you eat meat!" (One or two tentatively raised eyebrows. "Well, when the butchers have prepared the meat, they give the bones

brothers' handwork for eight years now — but this is the first time they have had a chance to learn the details of the great book's making. "I like to teach the Anglo-Saxons from the imagination. I read them *Beowulf*, and they love the idea that they were such a fierce and pagan lot, yet in 200 years' time they were producing the most beautiful works of art. And that art doesn't have to be personal, with the artist receiving all the acclaim. This was done for its own sake — for the sake of beauty, for the glory of God. They responded to that."

"They've already cottoned on to the fact that the books in our own school library are falling apart. And that the books here aren't. So they're learning about really bothering, really taking care. Next term it's the Norman Conquest, and we'll be able to make our own books about the Bayeux Tapestry. We can't quite work out the way in which the pages are numbered at the moment. But we're getting there."

For details of all the British Library's education resources and its spring-term workshop series, contact: The British Library Education Service, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3DG (0171-412 7791; fax 0171-412 7508)

LONDON

AN IDEAL HUSBAND First night of preview for Peter Hall's 1992 production of Wilde's drama of political peace and scandal. A star cast includes Martin Shaw, Anna Corio and Penny Corio. Theatre Royal, Haymarket SW1 (0171 239 5800) Tonight-Jan 16, 7.45pm; Mon-Sat, 5pm; Opera Jan 17, 7pm.

MACBETH First night of preview for the English Touring Theatre's successful production. Paul Higgins takes the title role and Stephen Unwin directs. Lyric Theatre, Tottenham, W6 (0181 741 2311) Tonight-Mon 7.30pm; Opera Jan 15 7pm.

PERCUSSION BASH The London Philharmonic opens the new year with a celebration of the works of percussion. A night of the day includes a warm-up concert with the LPO percussionists, an evening of percussion with the LPO and an evening of percussion with the LPO and an evening of percussion with the LPO.

IS A CHRISTMAS CAROL Revival of an old favourite but over-own production. Clive Francis plays Scrooge. Barbican, EC2 (0171 439 8831) Tonight-Sat, 7.15pm; Mon-Sat, 8pm; Sat, 4pm.

THE DUCHESSES OF MALTA A modern take on the classic story of a woman in a man's world. Produced in London as part of its tour. Wyndham's, Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0171 289 1746) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; main Thurs and Sat, 2.30pm.

HYSTORIA Henry Goodman plays the role of the Roman Emperor. In a new production, with Tom Postle as Salustius. Duke of York, St Martin's Lane, WC2 (0171 535 1102) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; main Thurs and Sat, 2.30pm.

AN INSPECTOR CALLS Stephen Gately's powerful production, with Nicholas Woodson as the all-knowing inspector, and Edward Peel and Susan Regal as the police. Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0171 434 5025) Mon-Fri, 7.45pm; Sat, 8.15pm; main Wed, 2.30pm; Sat, 5pm.

THE KINGDOM Brody medical soap opera made for Channel 4 by out director. Lido, 100 Tottenham Court Road, W1 (0171 593 3647).

SEVEN 1/2 Unsettling and off-beat serial with a twist. With Morgan Freeman and Brad Pitt. Director, David Fincher. Barbican, EC2 (0171 439 8831) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm; Opera Jan 15 7pm.

THE FIELDS OF AMBROSIA A New Musical. "A stunning song." *Chichester Music*. Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, WC2 (0171 362 3000) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

AMBASSADORS 25th Anniversary. 344 4444. Last 1/2. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

TRANSPORTING Award-winning play from the Royal National Theatre. Theatre Royal, Haymarket, SW1 (0171 239 5800) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

APOLLO VICTORIA 40th Anniversary. 344 4444. Last 1/2. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

STARLIGHT EXPRESS "A modern musical." *Chichester Music*. Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, WC2 (0171 362 3000) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

TODAY'S CHOICE

A daily guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Kris Anderson

ELSEWHERE

BIRMINGHAM Mass Elder and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra offer three English 20th-century lyrical masterpieces in tonight's programme. *Duke's Song of Summer* opens the concert, followed by Tappin's showpiece for violin, viola and cello, the *Triple Concerto*, and Holst's colourful *The Planets*. Symphony Hall, Centenary Square, B1 (0121 312 3333) Tonight, 7.30pm, repeated Sat, 7pm.

NORWICH Opening night for Jim Carver's production of a comedy. *The Play* will feature a cast of local actors. Norwich City Hall, Victoria Square (01603 266655) Tonight, 7.30pm.

LONDON GALLERIES British Museum, Old and New paintings (0171 638 1555) Hayward Gallery, London (0171 754 8811) National Gallery, London (0171 754 8811) Tate Gallery, London (0171 754 8811) Victoria and Albert Museum, London (0171 754 8811)

THEATRE GUIDE Jeremy Kingston's assessment of theatre shows in London. House full, return only. Seats at all prices.

JOLSON The highs and lows of the singer with a monster ego. Brian Cobby tells of the singer's exploits. Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, WC2 (0171 434 5025) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; main Thurs and Sat, 2.30pm.

ROSECRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD Adrian Scarborough and Simon Russell Beale play Shogood's ancient loves. Matthew Francis directs. National Theatre, South Bank, SE1 (0171 836 2121) Tonight-Sat, 7.30pm; main Thurs and Sat, 2.30pm.

RUPERT STREET LONELY HEARTS CLUB English Touring Theatre's production of Jonathan Harvey's *Rupert Street Lonely Hearts Club* is an east London based where most of the characters have love.

THE DUCHESSES OF MALTA A modern take on the classic story of a woman in a man's world. Produced in London as part of its tour. Wyndham's, Charing Cross Road, WC2 (0171 289 1746) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; main Thurs and Sat, 2.30pm.

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CINEMA GUIDE

David Brent's assessment of films in London and reviews indicated with the symbol: on release across the country

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT (15) Julie Roberts and her husband's unlikely love story. With a small cast of famous faces. *Chichester Music*. Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, WC2 (0171 362 3000) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

THE INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD (PG) A young Indian boy comes alive. A touching and imaginative version of Lynne Reid Baker's novel. *Chichester Music*. Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, WC2 (0171 362 3000) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

THE SILENT CRY (PG) A young Indian boy comes alive. A touching and imaginative version of Lynne Reid Baker's novel. *Chichester Music*. Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, WC2 (0171 362 3000) Mon-Sat, 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm.

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ENTERTAINMENTS

ART GALLERIES

ROY HILLS GALLERY, Chiswick and Frie City at 21, Strawberry Lane, Weybridge, Surrey, TW20 2BU. Tel: 0181 891 1111. Hours: 10.30-5.30.

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OPERA & BALLET

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■ VISUAL ART

Plans afoot in Piccadilly: the Royal Academy's president predicts a year of momentous change.



■ THEATRE 1

A refreshingly funny slice of seedy London life comes in *Goldhawk Road* at the Bush.

THE TIMES
ARTS

■ THEATRE 2

... but the sordid world revealed in the *Old Red Lion's* Bukowski bill does not merit staging.



■ THEATRE 3

"Multicultural hogwash" at the National comes to an end as the leading actor quits *Cyrano*.

Simon Tait talks to the newly re-elected president of the Royal Academy about his plans for expansion and development

Presidential ambitions for the Academy

It takes the kind of Panglossian rose tint that would make even Virginia Bottomley blush to turn a likely £500,000 loss into a triumph, but as the Royal Academy enters the most critical year in its recent history, its president, Sir Philip Dowson, has it. *Africa: Art of a Continent* closes on January 21, having drawn an estimated 250,000 visitors and general critical acclaim, but Dowson admits that it is likely to be the academy's biggest ever loss-maker.

As he never misses the chance to point out, the academy gets no public funding at all. And if it did, it would probably not have been allowed to do the exhibition.

"We jealously guard our independence because it makes it possible to do things which would otherwise be impossible. I really believe the academy is the only institution that could have presented the *Africa* exhibition: it's so fraught with political and financial problems that we alone could undertake it because we are responsible only to ourselves and the Queen," he says.

Political problems included having to change some of the Islamic exhibits so as not to inflame fundamentalist rage in Egypt, and it is not the first time the academy has courted political fury. Three years ago Dowson's predecessor, Sir Roger de Grey, ignored Foreign Office advice and went ahead with *The Sacred Art of Tibet*, which highlighted the continuing destruction of ancient Tibetan heritage by the occupying Chinese forces.

But financial considerations could easily have been a more persuasive reason for not going ahead with the *Africa* exhibition when a major core under pulled out (although here was some sponsorship from De Beers, the Anglo-American corporation).

Instead, the academy decided on aesthetic grounds: "We felt that the time was right, that we had almost an obligation to present it. It's enormously important. We previously had to create a new museum within the galleries in six weeks, a great tribute to

"We are responsible only to ourselves and the Queen"

In his first interview since his election, Dowson says 1996 is the academy's year of decisions, when its future will be cast and adjustments made to prepare for that future. He has just been re-elected for his third year as president, a formality after a nail-biting contest in 1993 to take over from the late de Grey. A founder of Arup Associates, he is only the fifth architect to be elected, beating another, Colin St John Wilson.

The abundance of architectural candidates was no accident. The project de Grey bequeathed to the academy was the acquisition of 6 Burlington Gardens, the home behind the academy of the Museum of Mankind, which moves back to the British Museum in 1997. A draft lottery scheme is being circulated among members in the next few days before a formal bid is made to the Arts and Heritage Lottery Funds to convert the building to the academy's use.

The freehold is transferring from the Department of the Environment to the Department of National Heritage, and the academy wants it on the same basis as its present building, a 999-year lease on a peppercorn rent.

Three-quarters of the space

at 6 Burlington Gardens will be used as an extension of the present academy, which is now bursting at the seams thanks to the increased activities brought by the new Sackler Galleries. The money-spinning *Manet to Gauguin* exhibition last year, for instance, had 250,000 people easing through those rooms.

The architect Michael Hopkins has devised a masterplan which includes a brasserie, the best art-book shop in London and a great atrium between the two buildings. The ground floor would be for the RA Schools, giving them exhibition space and studios.

"This would be a centre for the visual arts, and in the middle of Piccadilly. I think it would be a great gift to the nation," Dowson says, and he has already started by clearing half the cars out of the academy's forecourt and replacing them with fixed seating.

The most notable innovation in the new acquisition would be the architecture centre. "We desperately need a place which is a greenfield site, not associated with any professional or government or commercial institution but absolutely, in that sense, united." The academy has a popular programme of architectural lectures, hosts seminars on urban matters and plans an exhibition on links between the north and south of London.

"This architecture centre would be the natural place for all these sorts of discussions," Dowson says. "Major issues of public importance in urban matters and the environment can be debated and discussed because we have no axe to grind, we are an open place. I'm not thinking of presenting just models and drawings, which are difficult to understand, but using new technology in presentations so that we can try to present in a way which grabs people."

"The environment as a whole and design within the environment is of national importance because the health of cities is the health of nations, and the urban problems of the 21st century are the heart of any discussion."

The existing galleries are in



Academic excellence: Sir Philip Dowson is determined "to lay foundations to meet the challenges of financial backing as well as design"

Return to the gallows poll

RADIO: Peter Barnard on the end of Thatcher - and the start of a scintillating new series

Politicians get away with murder, thanks to the electronic media. So fast is information disseminated, so instant is the analysis and so rapid the transition from this crisis to the next that even the most appalling cock-ups get little more than their allotted 15 minutes of infamy.

Which is why programmes that look backwards serve a most useful purpose: they can often reveal more by taking a longer perspective, and they also serve to remind us of the full horrors attendant upon the absence of someone who has the guts to say "No, minister" when faced with a politician in full cry.

Consequences (Radio 4) is a series about the ramifications of public policy. It is introduced by Tony Travers of the London School of Economics, a man with the journalist's essential instinct: he knows how to let a good story tell itself.

This week the subject was the poll tax, as all but its inventors, called the community charge. This tax, much more than the issue of European integration, was to bring down Margaret Thatcher.

We know the story, and it was retold here with admirable clarity through the voices of those who assembled and then disassembled the policy. But I was as much struck by the coincidental messages that were supplied by unrelated events.

The ambition to abolish the rates was announced at the Tory conference in 1984, but wiped off the front pages by the Brighton bomb. At the start of 1986, the Cabinet met to consider the final poll tax proposal, but that meeting

began with the Westland crisis. Thus poll tax discussion was truncated (and opponents such as Nigel Lawson silenced) because Michael Heseltine walked out of the Government. And on the day Kenneth Baker assembled the press to launch the poll tax, the space shuttle *Columbia* blew up.

People less inward looking than politicians, less obsessed with their own small world, might perhaps have paused to wonder whether three disasters might not be sending a message about a fourth.

Alas, Thatcher had long since become, as someone put it in the programme, "captivated by an idea at the expense of political realities". Baker, one of five Environ-

ment Secretaries during the life of the poll tax, had put on slide shows and fancy graphics in a room at Chequers in order to convince Thatcher that the poll tax was a winner.

Graphs, bar charts and "pictures of houses with chimneys" were all used to overwhelm the central contradiction of the tax, that a charge imposed by central government as a way of neutering local government would nonetheless be blamed on local councils, not on Whitehall.

But there was, though, a certain symmetry to the whole sad episode. In 1981, Heseltine — the then Environment Secretary — had considered and rejected replacing the rates with the poll tax.

In 1990, Heseltine stood against Thatcher, precipitated the arrival of John Major, and was called into the Cabinet... to abolish the poll tax. Ain't life grand?

THEATRE: No need for a plot in West London; Bukowski, the dead Beat, goes on; Rostand's nose out of joint in India

Chekhov at street level

THE *Goldhawk Road* is the sort of street you find less and less in gentrified West London. In it, you can buy second-hand hubcaps and heap Indian jewellery, eat Caribbean fish stew or over-one liver and chips, and see the ghosts of several own-market dramatic characters. The Steptoes drove their horse and cart down it, the ramp in Pinter's *Caretaker* tumbled along it to "the best public convenience in Shepherd's Bush", and a character in Billy Roche's *Poor Beast in the Rain* ran away from Ireland with her fancy-man, only to go mad in one of its rabby side-streets.

The Bush, which is on the corner of Goldhawk Road and Shepherd's Bush itself, is early mindful of its duty to its streets reputation, for it has the Royal National Theatre, a premiere and is now presenting a highly enjoyable piece actually named after it. Simon Bent's comedy is set in a flat that almost audibly echoes *Hammersmith* and to condemn it and settle its motley occupants in tower block in White City, rect, house, people — all are seedy disarray.

"But there's no plot," wailed friend as we walked down Goldhawk Road after the play. Nor is there, not really. It says the same about Chekhov, and the effect here is a *Cherry Orchard* or *Three Sisters* transposed to the world of Pinter's *Homecoming* or, again, *Caretaker*. The characters even have neo-Chekhovian habits, such as rejecting irrelevant oddities

Goldhawk Road
Bush

into the conversation ("If you stand under a pylon long enough you get leukaemia") and indulging in *fin de siècle* rumination about the future ("Fifty years from now they'll have found a cure for death").

The legal occupant is Trevor Martin's splendidly lugubrious Paul, a retired coach-driver deep into girly mags and hypochondria. By way of preparing for death, he has summoned Colin and Reg (John Stumm, Neil Stuke) who may or may not be his long-neglected sons. In their wake comes Ralph (Danny Webb), a sort of punk spy for whom they have been selling pirated software, and Jack Carr's John, a former workmate of

Paul's given to making phone-calls to his wife and mistresses from what he swears is the outskirts of Aberdeen.

Bent gives us some alarming insights into the sexual habits of coach-drivers, those Don Juans of the M25, and some entertainingly grim ones into loneliness and ennui. Only when he deals with the wrangles of Paul's matriarchal home-help and her unhappily married daughter does his writing become predictable and repetitive. Elsewhere, all is fresh and funny enough to leave one accepting, even welcoming, the absence of conventional plot.

Indeed, Bent's point may be that these lost people are incapable of sustaining anything so conventional and considered as a plot. Ralph actually plans to get Paul to buy his flat from the council at



Jack Carr: woman trouble

the usual discount and then resell it himself at a profit — but can so chaotic a criminal bring off such a coup? Lopakhin as failed comedian: updated, relocated Chekhov again.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

Good riddance to curried Cyrano

I HAVE some very good news for you. Naseeruddin Shah, the silken-skinned actor from Bombay who has propped up alone — and for well-nigh three months — the wretched *Cyrano* at the National Theatre, has fired of the production.

This latest adaptation of Edmund Rostand's story, transposed by Jatinder Verma and his Tara Arts group to India in the 1930s, will end its inelegant innings in just over a week. It will not, as originally conceived by Verma and the National, travel on to India itself. Theatregoers there should thank Shah for his act of theatrical euthanasia. They should not, however, write to him c/o Tara Arts.

It is easy to see why Shah is loath to tour his homeland with *Cyrano* and

Tara. The latter — "a pioneering Asian theatre company" in this country — has contrived to produce two hours and 45 minutes of multicultural hogwash. It is a wonder the Indian star, in lucrative demand in Bombay's film world, has swallowed this swill for so long.

With the exception of Shah, who interprets with panache the etiolated role of Cyrano Damnuil Barchha, *Cyrano* is an embarrassment. With any luck, his brusque *adieu* should ensure that the bubble of Tara Arts is burst at last.

Since its establishment nearly two decades ago by the Kenyan-Asian Verma, Tara has been treated invariably to cottonwool reviews by the liberal British critical Establishment. Its formula is predictable and requires little by

way of authentic invention. Take a classic of the Western dramatic canon, "curry it" (as one waspish critic put it), throw in heaps of Urdu dialogue and *wala*, you have a dashing, Indo-Western theatrical experience (a "post-colonial" *Tempest*, for example).

It has taken our critics 20 years to see through something Shah saw through in no time at all. If adapting a classic does not move it in a meaningful new direction, if the "Indianisation" of a European work does not rise above the level of a mediocre conceit, and if the cast is seldom better than pedestrian, it is time to shout "enough" — or "bus ho gaya hai", as Verma would prefer.

TUNKU VARADARAJAN

Carnal porridge

Double Bill
Old Red Lion

AT THIS same theatre a year ago, in a promising first play called *After*, the dead Beat poet Charles Bukowski was reincarnated first as a mouse and then as a human again in order to confront some London bar flies with the poverty of their lives compared to his roister-doistering exploits. Now comes the Way Off Broadway Company from Vancouver to show us some actual Bukowski material, prose and (or so the programme says) poetry, adapted for the stage by Michael Wener, who also directs, and Michael Schaldemose. On the whole, I preferred the mouse.

The pub theatre was packed solid, but most of the audience had probably been lured there by the titles of the two 75-minute plays rather than by Bukowski's reputation. *Erections*, *Ejaculations* and *Exhi-*

bitions is the first one. The *First Machine* the second (this machine does make an appearance at the end, in what is absolutely nothing more than a schoolboy joke).

What the adapters appear to have done is join up some of their author's scattered writings to make patterns that will conjure up Bukowski's sordid world of compulsive drinkers and fantasists, whores and rapists. In the first play we meet the sexually voracious Harry (Schaldemose) selling himself to the even more voracious Connie (Deb Pickman) with the opening line "you know, I do well on the sex quizzes".

This leads to a repetitious sequence of complaints by him, to her and to us, about what bitches women are, and complaints by her about what a slob Harry is, and how he doesn't do what a woman wants done.

The *Machine* pattern is a mosaic of fantasies of sexual and murderous aggression, sometimes treated as comedy, that brighten Harry's hobo life. Ian Butcher does sturdy work as a succession of roughs and toughs, but once again it all goes on and on, men coupling with women, with men, with the dead, and finally with that nasty machine. We can have all that sort of thing at home without going to the theatre to see it.

JEREMY KINGSTON

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Chance and circumstance can shape even the greatest of men, Ian McIntyre finds in a new biography of America's 16th President

Masterly work made from a piece of folly

LINCOLN
By David Herbert Donald
Jonathan Cape, £20

A whimsical but enduring convention of biographical writing decrees that authors should profess remorse at what they have inflicted on their families in the course of their unending researches. "For Aida and Bruce," writes David Herbert Donald, "who have had to live with Lincoln for most of their lives."

One feels for them. Lincoln's secretaries may have revered him as "a backwoods Jupiter," but the 16th President of the United States, a shambling and uncouth man, was only minimally house-trained. The voice was high and piercing. He was addicted to puns and to stories that were every bit as tall as the famous stove-pipe hat into which he frequently stuck correspondence and documents.

In male company the tone of his anecdotes could veer from the folksy to the scatological. A century on, Lyndon Johnson would certainly have slapped his thigh at the one about the English family who kept a picture of George Washington in their lavatory. "Most appropriate," countered their American guest. "There is

nothing that will make an Englishman shit so quick as the sight of Genl Washington."

And yet to make an interesting narrative of Lincoln's first 50 years would test the skills of a Scheherazade. "Why Scripps," Lincoln said to a journalist keen to write his campaign biography, "it is a great piece of folly to attempt to make anything of my early life." It could, he said, be condensed into one sentence from *Gray's Elegy*—"The short and simple annals of the poor."

Boldly—possibly rashly—Donald disregards this guidance from the horse's mouth about how to handle the tedious years as carpenter and riverboat man, soldier and postmaster, blacksmith

and surveyor. He also acknowledges that he has devoted more attention than some earlier biographers to Lincoln's "brain-numbing labor" in his law practice, in consequence we are over a third of the way into this long book before he reaches Washington as President-elect.

From 1860 the pace quickens. Within weeks of his election every state of the lower South had taken steps towards secession. Initially Lincoln seemed totally unable to make things go right. Early in 1862 things looked so desperate that he contemplated for the first time the prospect of Confederate success, and spoke of "the bare possibility of our being two nations."

Donald is a highly fastidious biographer. "In tracing the life of Abraham Lincoln, I have asked at every stage of his career what he knew when he had to take critical actions, how he evaluated the evidence before him, and why he reached his decisions." His account is based largely on the President's own words, whether in letters and messages or in conversations recorded by reliable witnesses. Donald's encyclopaedic



Lincoln as a young lawyer

knowledge of the vast secondary literature is deployed only when letters or documents cannot be found elsewhere. The result is a biography written essentially from Lincoln's point of view, using only the information and ideas that were available to him.

Although this is an austere approach, it is a rewarding one, made possible by the availability of the Lincoln Papers in the Library of Congress. After the new volume authorised life by Nicolay and Hay appeared in 1890 these papers were sealed until 1947, and were therefore not available to such major biographers as Albert J. Beveridge, William E. Barton or Carl Sandburg.

Donald devotes refreshingly little space to correcting the errors of previous biographers. Equally commendably, he sets his face against historiographical discussion: "This is a book about Lincoln—not a book about the literature about Lincoln."

Readers seeking a general history of the United States during the mid-19th century must accordingly look elsewhere. So must those interested in a detailed account of the Civil War or of the internal affairs of the Confederacy. Donald offers no broad philosophical discussion of the origins of the conflict, and spends little time on the question of whether it was the first modern war. "These are important subjects, but they did not present themselves to Abraham Lincoln in any practical way."

Of the many which did, Donald gives a masterly description. Lincoln's relations with McClellan and later with Grant; the development of his thinking on the Emancipation Proclamation and the ideas and rhetoric of the Gettysburg Address; his campaign for re-election in 1864 and Radical plans to unhorse him—all are passed in orderly and judicious review.

Donald believes that in focusing closely on Lincoln himself—"on what he knew, when he knew it, and why he made his decisions"—he has been led to paint him in different colours from earlier biographers. A less modest man might have said that the colours were not just different, but truer.

He is struck by how often chance played "a determining role and emphasises Lincoln's enormous capacity for growth. Most importantly he insists on the essential passivity of Lincoln's nature. Indeed he chooses as an epigraph a sentence from a letter which convinces him that this was a trait which Lincoln recognised in himself: "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me."

After half a century of Lincoln studies, Donald does not believe in doing his readers' work for them. Like all the best biographies, this finely written book seeks to explain rather than to judge. What it explains is how one of the least experienced and most poorly prepared men ever elected to high office became the greatest American President.

He mounted the warrior's steed

At the time Lloyd George formed his coalition Government at the end of 1916, Britain was in far greater peril than most people realised. Still facing the combined German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires with their interior lines, Britain was running out of manpower, shipping, food and cash. Its principal allies, France and Russia, were even more gravely weakened.

Soon matters became much worse, as Germany declared unrestricted U-boat warfare, Russia's effective participation in the war was brought to an end by revolution, and the French Army, after another failed offensive, was struck by mutinies. On the credit side America entered the war, but in such a state of military unpreparedness that it would be a long time before there could be any significant consequences on the Western front, where the war had to be decided. Britain's contribution was, therefore, more essential than ever, but in early 1917 its ability to survive seemed increasingly doubtful. Stocks of wheat, which had been enough to last 14 weeks when Lloyd George took office, had fallen to nine weeks' supply by mid-April.

Yet within two years of the formation of his Government, and before the Americans could achieve a massive presence in Europe, the enemy empires had collapsed and the war was won. How much of this astonishing reversal of fortune was due to Lloyd George himself? In what sense was he, as David French says, "the indispensable man necessary to win the war?"

French is a penetrating ana-



Lloyd George knew that military strategy was intimately connected with the morale of the troops: on the front lines with British soldiers in a trench near Fricourt, France, 1916

lyst and judicious in his assessments. He is by no means blind to Lloyd George's faults and does not oversimplify the merits of his Government. He doubts, for instance, that the small War Cabinet Lloyd George set up "enhanced the efficiency of central govern-

ment to any great extent". He did, however, make a number of vital appointments, among which that of Sir Joseph Maclay as Shipping Controller was perhaps the most vital. Maclay was a strong advocate of the convoy system, as was the Secretary of the War Cabinet, Sir Maurice Hankey. Lloyd George was not immediately converted to the idea, but once he was the results were decisive. Without accepting the too dramatic story that he imposed the system outright when he visited the Admiralty on April 30, 1917, French considers that the Admiralty would have taken even longer to agree to it "without the Prime Minister's overt pressure".

However, he insists that convoys and the Govern-

ment's shipbuilding programme, though important, did less to avert defeat than the policy of reducing imports and concentrating shipping on the shortest routes, particularly the Atlantic. Either way, Lloyd George's measures certainly saved the country and with it the Allied cause.

Above all, French argues that Lloyd George "saw more clearly than any other British

policymaker the intimate connection between strategy and national morale". Hence his desire for relatively cheap success in the Levant (which he achieved), and his reluctance to commit the British Army to any further grandiose offensives in the West. Unfortunately his mistaken support for the French General Nivelle at the beginning of 1917, and his bungled attempt to put Haig under Nivelle, deprived him of moral authority, and to some extent of self-confidence.

In dealing with Haig later that year, French takes this and other factors fully into account in seeking to explain Lloyd George's failure to prevent one of the war's most ghastly attritional struggles, the third Battle of Ypres. He is convincing on Lloyd George's reasons

for allowing the battle to be launched, but why he did not at least try to stop it before its terrible last phase, at Passchendaele, is never adequately explained.

It was quite right, in French's view, that British manpower was conserved during the ensuing winter. He supports Lloyd George on that issue, and does not blame him for the initial success of the German offensive in the spring of 1918. When victory for the Allies followed between August and November, it took everybody by surprise, soldiers and civilians alike. Lloyd George's first instinct was to carry the war into Germany and make sure that the victory was unmistakable. "If peace were made now," he said presciently on October 13, "in

20 years' time the Germans would say what Carthage had said about the First Punic War... that by better preparation and organisation they would be able to bring about victory next time." But the supposed cost of prolonging the war, together with other factors, resulted in what French sees as a premature armistice. This, rather than Versailles, may have been what caused all the sacrifice of the Great War to be wasted.

French's valuable work deserves a wider readership than it is likely to have. Produced at a deterrent price, it is also presented in a severely academic mode, with references cluttering almost every page. But no one with a serious interest in the subject can afford to miss it.

Poetry that order breeds

In one of his most memorable poems, Roy Fuller reflects on a photograph of the elderly Brahms perusing a score of Wagner's. The composer's equanimity appears unshaken. And yet, Fuller wonders, "how can he not be falling back aghast? At the chromatic spectrum of decay, / Starting to destroy already / His classical universe?"

Fuller, like Brahms, was a man who needed order. Tidy-minded and fastidious in his dress, he lived in a suburban bungalow and worked for most of his life as a building society solicitor. The American poet Wallace Stevens—another of Fuller's heroes and himself a man of affairs—famously wrote of the artist's "rage for order". Those who have read Fuller at any length may be forgiven for thinking that, except at his rare best, he had order all right but was somewhat short on rage. A preoccupation with the quotidian can be merely mundane. Deflate the mighty line and you may have nothing to show for it but flatness.

These impressions have been revived by the appearance—only four years after the poet's death—of this critical biography. It says much for the author that, if he cannot remove such reservations, he does much to modify

Clive Wilmer

ROY FULLER
Writer and
Society

By Neil Powell
Carcanet, £25

them and much to increase one's sympathy for Fuller. He compels attention to poems that might be overlooked; and his re-evaluation of Fuller's 11 novels persuades me that these have been unjustly neglected. Acute and judicious, he is as unafraid of severity as of enthusiasm and has an unflinching eye for the telling detail.

The book belongs, in short, to a threatened species: intelligent non-academic criticism. As such, it exemplifies the best of the values Fuller himself championed. Though he moved in the course of his life from wild left to respectable Centre, Fuller was consistent in defending what Powell calls "a culturally enabling socialism": a belief in the democratisation and preservation of high culture. In his last years he accepted the responsibility of making this case in public, first as Oxford Professor of Poetry, and then when his orderly skills were called upon by public bodies such as the Poetry Book Society, the BBC and the Arts Council.

Powell succeeds in making this last phase as absorbing as anything in Fuller's life—as his wartime experience in East Africa or his dotty northern childhood, spent drifting with a widowed mother between seaside hotels. As biography, the book works best when a larger glimpse of society is included. Where more intimate relationships are concerned, there are odd lacunae. One would like to know more about Fuller's family. His wife, in particular, is never described and we are not even told exactly how he met her. But it is a relief to read a new biography that has no need for sensational revelations. Fuller, always a reticent man, would have been pleased.

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KEW
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the known plants on earth". Ah, the confidence of the age! Even now, Kew grows only 10 per cent of the world's known flora. Happily, it still has a ginkgo planted by Princess Augusta, and Chambers's outrageous Pagoda, minus its glittering dragon finials—could this be another use for National Lottery money? In the last war, the RAF cut holes in every floor and dropped model bombs through, to get a 100-foot vertical drop.

Kew's tolling gardeners hardly feature in the book, the focus instead being on the great directors, Banks, William and Joseph Hooker and, in the 1890s, the autocratic Thistlethorn-Dyer who finally drove the gardeners to revolt. These directors needed to be fighters because the Royal Botanic Gardens led such a shaky existence and twice in the last century would have



Frozen serenity: Kew's Palm House and lake in winter

founded, save for directorial obduracy. Kew's critics were legion and included scientists angered by its dog-in-the-manger attitude to plants, Treasury officials, and the ambitions of the British Museum and Royal Horticultural Society. Journalists sniped that Kew's floral beds were too gaudy, or not gaudy enough.

Men of science and morality, Kew's directors generally viewed the public as the enemy. What had the higher realms of botany to do with

disputed, Residents held in- bulators? In Kew's woods and ditches, the poor got up to worse things than children's games. Thistlethorn-Dyer was plagued by a Mrs Wheatstone who ran a brothel beside the herbarium, then a tea-shop at Kew Palace lodge. Even in Princess Augusta's time, the public were allowed free into the Botanic collection, if respectfully dressed (no coloured neckties). But access to the whole gardens, opening hours, and where the gates should be, were all hotly

dignation. Meetings to demand Thistlethorn-Dyer remove the boundary wall. The director actually rebuilt it higher, claiming the need to stop gardeners legging it across to the public houses.

A PARTICULARLY interesting part of the book is devoted to Kew's role as mother garden for the Empire; her botanists profoundly changing the agricultural economies of large tracts of the globe. At the end the book tails off somewhat, despite the bright tally of improvements, expansion, Kew's first television commercial in 1994, and the inevitable mission statement.

An appendix reveals some ominous figures. The Edwardian era was a golden time for Kew Gardens. In 1915, there were more than four million visitors. Then admission charges were introduced, figures dropped dramatically and have in most years been around one million. Recently, numbers have dipped considerably below, so despite its hallowed reputation, Kew does not seem particularly popular. Is it the cost, an entry charge of £4—an increase of 800 per cent since 1987? Or does the explanation lie deeper? One is left wondering if in a century's time, Princess Augusta's dream will have lost the power to lure people from their own exotic gardens and conservatories to the palm houses and rockeries beside the Thames.

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Wind, rain and words

The story is as old as man, and man is old on Orkney. Four thousand years ago the megalith-raisers left their mark there: the *Orkneyinga Saga* survives, a vessel for the tales of Norse blood-feuds. All had their storytellers, and now Orkney has George Mackay Brown.

This is a difficult task, one made the harder by what he calls the "basilisk stare of newsprint, radio, television". Yet, for more than 40 years he has persevered, writing still by hand, publishing steadily if sometimes unevenly plays and novels, stories, poems. Epitomising Kant's dictum that the greatest journey a man can make is the journey inside his own head, Mackay Brown has left Orkney only once since the 1950s, when he studied under Edwin Muir in Edinburgh. This collection of 18

Ross Leckie

WINTER TALES
By George Mackay Brown
John Murray, £15.99

short stories written over the last 20 years shows that it is not dull to have Orkney in the blood: it is to have the elemental.

Just as the islands of which he sometimes seems a rocky outcrop have no trees, Mackay Brown's stories lack as much as they contain. There is almost no emotion before Mackay Brown's chthonian deities. There is only sea and wind and life and death and earth. These stories are threnodies and elegies — for many things that were, and might have been, and some that might yet be.

The prose reflects these themes. Though finely wrought, there is about it a deliberate and beguiling unease. It is clipped and stripped, lapidary, heavily end-stopped. But then it is suddenly epic, resonating the oral tradition that these stories manage to make quite their own. We have the "star-thronged wheel of darkness", a "deep-cargued ship", the Homeric "winged word". Then lavishly Mackay Brown puts his ears back and the dark powers he would master sing: "That year, the elements of sun and rain and wind were so exquisitely measured and scattered upon the furrows that the little black-ploughed fields

sown with barley and oats had shallow pools of green soon and then the sloping rectangles were all green, all crammed with murmurings and whisperings in the wayward wind."

But man in these stories is a cipher, and a generation but a "slow ponderous wave of time". A consistent theme is eventual light in the darkness. At its best, as in *Ikey*, this is moving. At its worst, as in *The Architect* or *The Road to Emmaus*, it becomes only a rather laboured manifestation of a convert's own Catholicism. We miss the tragedy of many men's preferences for the dark. Differently and secularly handled, it can be compelling. *The Sons of Upland Farm* is almost unbearably painful before a

revelation, a story stark then starting in its profundity.

Yet ciphers these characters remain. Only in the poetry of R. S. Thomas is such bleakness elsewhere to be found. People are vanity. When they are not indigenous islanders, they are puppets before Mackay Brown's ineluctable and atavistic gods.

So, in *The Woodcarver*, is the laird of the island no more than a symbol for "a progressive young man newly out of Cambridge"; in *Ikey* you think that Dr Aeneas Giles Logan has escaped stereotype — until, inevitably, he too contributes to Mackay Brown's relentless whole: "We all come out of wind, water, stone,

fire," he says. "We get shaken back into them in the end."

This is dangerous ground. If these stories are to succeed, they must rise from the parochial and touch the universal. Nova Scotia, not Orkney, is Alasdair MacLeod's point of departure in his collection of stories, *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood*, that now defines this genre. Mackay Brown may fall short of that mark, but he brings us very, very close. In Sophocles' *Ajax*, a play of which Mackay Brown's *Dr Logan* would approve, Ajax says: "I see that we are, all of us, mere shadows, phantoms of nothing."

With *Winter Tales*, Mackay Brown has transcended Orkney, and placed a boulder on that larger, awesome cairn.



Derwent May on the witty stories of Julian Barnes

More than just Sleeve notes

CROSS CHANNEL
By Julian Barnes
Jonathan Cape, £13.99

There is a great deal of pleasure to be had from this first collection of short stories by Julian Barnes. But the blurb is slightly misleading. "No one has a better perspective to see things from both sides of the Channel than Barnes," it says.

But I remember the opening paragraph of Barnes's article on the Channel Tunnel, in his volume of *Letters from London* written for *The New Yorker*. There he describes how Flaubert's character Bouvard, on learning that an earthquake might cause Britain and France to tumble into each other, runs away in terror — not of the cataclysm, but of the idea of the British coming nearer. These ten stories are about the British in France — a view from one side. The French, like Bouvard, seem mostly to have fled from them.

They are also stories of a very distinct character. They range from the 17th to the 21st century, defining moments when typical British folk had (or may be expected to have) a presence in France. There is very little individual emotion or drama in them. They delicately, and often wittily, re-create with all its flavour a passage of social history.

The first story, *Interference*, is about a vain, bad-tempered English composer who has isolated himself in a French village in the early 1930s. Art, he believes, justifies him in total egoism. He has alienated all the villagers, yet has to persuade them to turn off their various electrical machines to prevent interference when he wants to hear his works being broadcast on the BBC from London. There are numerous perfect period touches, such as his description of the conductor Adrian Boulle as his "young champion". He dies one afternoon when his last work is being performed, and his wife has failed to alert the baker and butcher and farmers in time for them to switch off.

The whole story turns deftly and elegantly on this witty idea, yet the composer hardly seems an individual. He is like an intricate shell, perfectly reflecting a stage in its inhabitant's evolution, but without the inhabitant inside.

Other stories have similar strengths and weaknesses. *Experiment* is about the narrator's Uncle Freddy, a traveller for genuine wax polish who went to France for a motor rally in 1928 and got caught up with the Surrealists. This was because he said in a bar that he travelled in "Cire réaliste" — or, perhaps, when asked why he was there, said "Je suis, sire, rallyiste". Or maybe he even said, talking of the white wine he was drinking, "Je suis sur Réalities".

A brilliant trio of puns — quite surrealist themselves — but the subsequent story of how his new friends tested out whether he could distinguish blindfold between an Englishwoman and a Frenchwoman is just an ingenious piece of reconstruction of that milieu.

One of the very best stories is *Hermilage*, about two English women friends in the 1890s who buy a run-down chateau and vineyard in the Médoc. Their relationship, with its Victorian mixture of frankness and primness, is touchingly sketched, but once again the real interest lies in the account of the place and the time — the grape varieties being used, the varied reactions to the phylloxera menace, the other grape diseases (on which we get an entertaining but encyclopaedic paragraph). The descriptions are

particularly good in this story — the vineyards running across the land "like green corduroy", a blister "like a broad bean" — but I could not help wondering if it was not my own visits to the Médoc that made the story especially enjoyable for me, just as *Brambilla*, about the Tour de France, might especially please cyclists with its anecdotes.

There is only one story here that really grips by its tension and anguish — *Dragons*, which is about the persecution of the Protestants in the south of France 350 years ago, with an exiled Irish soldier among the savage persecutors.

In the last story, an ageing author is travelling to France by Eurostar early in the next century. This — we are led to suppose — is an oblique self-portrait by Barnes. He is a rather Kingsley Amis-like character here (though Amis would never have gone to France), testily but self-mockingly fussing about the correct use of language. He hints at the way in which characters he meets on the train turn into characters in his stories, and offers a profession of faith: he is obsessed, he says, with the recalling of "distant truths", and his art is dedicated to that recall by means of the "resonant fragment".

The best of all the stories here, *Evermore*, shares that preoccupation with remembering. A woman has spent her life going to France again and again, visiting the sites of First World War battles, after her brother was killed in the trenches. Barnes goes deeply into her feelings — her dislike of the wording on the memorials, the way her grief changes over time, her fears of the war being obliterated in mankind's memory.

Yet even here, the emotion is in danger of being swamped by the historical facts. The lengthy accounts of the battlefields and graveyards could practically serve as a guide-book for visitors (and would give the famous New Yorker fact-checkers a terrible time). If his old friend Martin Amis had not already used the title *The Information* for his latest novel, it would have been a perfectly appropriate one for Julian Barnes's new book.



Barnes: resonant fragments

The bitter sound of truth

THOMAS BERNHARD loathed Austria. Contempt for his compatriots and disgust at the State they inhabited were passions that sustained him throughout his life, and seemingly beyond. When he died in 1989, he left a will forbidding publication or performance of his works in his native land, and rejecting in advance any efforts the Austrian republic might make at posthumous rapprochement with one of its most eminent opponents.

There was more to this, of course, than simple loathing. There may once have been an Austria Bernhard loved, but the Austria he lived in had destroyed it. From the mid-1950s he laid bare that destruction in novels, short stories, poems, polemics and plays. In the bleak comedy of *Extinction* — his last novel, published in German in 1986 and now deftly rendered into English by David McLintock — Bernhard's reckoning with Austria finds one of its most compelling forums.

There is autobiography in all of Bernhard's fiction, just

as there is fiction in his autobiographical works. Real names are put to creative use. Living people are thinly disguised (too thinly, Bernhard's publishers and their lawyers discovered more than once). Identifiable places and buildings become symbols, the monumental repositories where history takes shape.

And above all, there is in Bernhard's protagonists something of Bernhard himself: sickly, obsessive, detached.

wordily introspective to the point almost of madness; consumed by violent hatreds. Franz-Josef Murau, narrator of *Extinction*, is typical. Superfluous younger son of wealthy parents, he resides in Rome, an unorthodox teacher of German literature. The whole of his existence, he tells his sole pupil, Gambetti, has been nothing more than "a struggle to throw off the disease of Austrian mindlessness".

For Murau, as for Bernhard, Austria is and always will be an "essentially National Socialist and Catholic nation" — the terms are inseparable and almost interchangeable. The country's tainted past and corrupt present are concentrated in the buildings and occupants of the Murau family estate at Wolfsegg.

Murau family estate at Wolfsegg. (Schloss Wolfsegg — though not this Schloss Wolfsegg — exists: near Bernhard's several homes in Upper Austria, it recurs in his work from the early 1960s.)

Murau wants nothing of Wolfsegg and what it represents, but he gets it all regardless. A car crash kills his father, mother and elder brother, forcing him to confront his poisoned inheritance. He does so in a moving, maddening, unparaphrased monologue that interweaves the threads of his troubled life: Wolfsegg and Rome, architec-

ture and history, politics and poetry, philosophy and art.

Almost inadvertently, from the depths of his self-absorption, Murau conjures a detailed world and a vivid supporting cast — a weak father and monstrous mother; two unloved, unlovely sisters; cosmopolitan Uncle Georg; hunters and gardeners; the sinister archbishop Spadolini; the poet Maria (who owes something to Ingeborg Bachmann); a portly, vulgar maker of wine-corks from Freiburg. All, like Murau himself, are viewed with cruel detachment — and who knows how much cruel distortion?

MURAU'S aim, and Bernhard's, is to come to terms with what has made him what he is, and to destroy it. Murau, like Bernhard, will call his defining, definitive written account *Extinction*, "because in it I intend to extinguish everything: everything I record will be extinguished". It is a grim and grotesque endeavour, accomplished with savage panache.

Working the graveyard shift

Lois Rathbone

JUST LIKE THAT
By Lily Brett
André Deutsch, £15.99

crash: "It was a pretty dramatic way to go."

The tone, though, is one of relentless comedy and the story rattles along, with good doses of humour of the Woody Allen variety. Food and fornication are the two things which take Esther's mind off work, and there are some graphic descriptions of both. A green salad in a hip, downtown restaurant is likely to be composed of oak leaves, dandelions and nasturtiums; "Melbourne was overrun with nasturtiums and dandelion leaves, and we're paying ten bucks a plate for them in Manhattan."

Brett invents a fine supporting cast of family and friends.



Brett: death and survival

There is Edek, Esther's quarrelsome father, who has a frail grasp of the English language, despite half a century spent in Australia. With Edek, healthy becomes "helzy", licence becomes "licen", and when he is overcharged by the local garage, he muses philosophically: "It's a highway, so they robbed it." Esther's best friend is Sonia Kaufman, a high-

powered lawyer, pregnant with fraternal twins, of which one, both or neither may conceivably be the offspring of her lover not her husband. She is a woman of terrifying verbal indiscretion, given to discussing vaginas and haemorrhoids in the middle of crowded restaurants. And there is Sean, Esther's husband. Considering the parallels between the author's life and that of her heroine, it comes as no surprise that Sean follows the same profession as Brett's own husband, David Rankin, an Australian painter. Sean is portrayed with such affection that the whole novel seems to have been intended as a love letter to the ideal husband.

My only quibble is with the title. Perhaps in Australia, where the novel was first published, the phrase "just like that" has no connotations; but for British readers, an unwanted image of Tommy Cooper springs to mind each time one contemplates the dustjacket.

Lois Rathbone is on the obituaries staff of The Times.

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مكتبة الأمل

How to avoid foreign jails

THE Foreign Office has come up with an idea which, when fully developed, could benefit every holidaymaker and might preserve the liberty and even the lives of a few.

Consular departments around the world are constantly being asked to solve the problems of holidaymakers who get into trouble through ignorance of the country they are visiting.

The idea is to produce a video outlining what to do and what not to do, what precautions to take and what to expect on arrival. Eventually it may be possible to show a different video in-flight for

sorts and on off-shore islands. "If we just managed to make one person think again, or opened the eyes of someone to the potential dangers, it would all be worthwhile," said an insider at the FO.

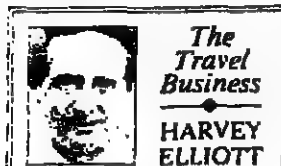
So far, there has been little response from the airlines, or from the tour operators, who have hinted that it might upset their passengers to be given such a stark warning at the start of their holidays.

A video produced by a car hire company which warns of the potential dangers of driving through Florida is now being shown on Britannia Airways flights. But it was so watered down after tour operators complained that it was "alarmist", that it is now little more than a "how to drive in the US" guide.

The Foreign Office issues regular advisory notes about countries in which travellers might expect to find unusual problems, either involving internal strife, crime or natural disasters. These are circulated to travel agents and tour operators but are too rarely seen by the customers.

How much better if these were given a professional polish by a film company and then shown on every screen during the flight. They are much more likely to be of use than the literature under your seat and would show that the airlines and the tour operators do have some concern about the dangers which might confront their clients.

For once the FO has got it absolutely right and the sooner its idea is put into practice the better.



The Travel Business
HARVEY ELLIOTT

each destination. The first experimental video, concentrating on the dangers of drug-taking, could be made specifically for tourists to Thailand.

The Foreign Office already issues blunt warnings about the dangers of becoming implicated in the drugs trade, even innocently. In Thailand, at least 21 Britons are in jail on drugs charges in the country, many more have been fined or deported and others are awaiting trial.

The Thai authorities are themselves determined to clamp down on drugs and police keep close watch on the crowds of backpackers in re-



Children running across the road at Messonghi Beach, Corfu, were in the care of Airtours, claims Holiday Which?

Children's club dangers

By HARVEY ELLIOTT

MANY children's clubs in Mediterranean resorts are potentially dangerous, badly run and ill-equipped, according to a new report by Holiday Which?

Some children are given little to do while crammed into bars in which the exits have been blocked. Others can run unsupervised across busy roads, says the Consumers' Association magazine.

A quarter of the 36 clubs inspected last summer in Majorca, the Algarve and Corfu, had safety problems, they claim.

child-minding services presented as fun-packed clubs," they say. "Most disturbing, in two cases there were serious safety problems: an overcrowded Majorcan bar with blocked fire exits was used for a children's pirate retreat and another Majorcan bar used for a children's disco had sheer drops from wide-open first-floor windows."

At Messonghi Beach in Corfu, clubs run by Airtours, Sunworld, Cosmos and First Choice were held on a pavement next to a service road and Holiday Which? claim that they saw children from

the Airtours club dash across the road in front of moving traffic.

The magazine's criticism — which included a description of one widely-used club as having "all the charm and personality of a bomb shelter" — appeared to have shocked most tour operators and facilities on offer.

"We will immediately go back to the clubs which have been criticised to ensure they are never used again if what the magazine's inspectors found was typical," said Len Mooney, the Overseas Prod-

uct Director of Sunworld. "We were very concerned about the criticism made of our clubs as they are very important to us," said a spokesman for First Choice.

"We are going back to the area and investigating in detail." Airtours, too, said that they would drop any children's clubs which did not come up to scratch.

Thomson, however, said that the findings were at odds with their own consumer research. "Our customers clearly don't share the CA's views, but we are investigating in-depth the issues which were raised in the report," said a spokeswoman.

EC plans cheap trips for oldies

BRITISH pensioners could soon be eligible for cut-price, heavily subsidised holidays throughout Europe. Harvey Elliott writes.

Details of the scheme — known as "social tourism" — are being examined by a small EC working party in Brussels and will be put to European tourism ministers next month.

The plans are being spearheaded by Spain, which has run Inisero, a similar scheme, for ten years and which has enabled three million pensioners to take cheap holidays.

Now an audit by the accountants Price Waterhouse has shown that the scheme helps to keep open hotels which would otherwise be closed during the winter, keeps old people fitter, and at the same time saves Spain millions of pesetas in social security and unemployment benefits.

Britain is so far refusing to back the proposal, but the Labour Party is anxious to examine it further. "It is a very exciting idea and one which should be considered both in Britain and Europe as a whole," said Nigel Griffiths, Labour's tourism spokesman.

Under the existing Inisero scheme, now being adopted by Portugal and soon to be taken up independently by other European states, elderly people are entitled to massive discounts on holidays taken outside the main holiday season.

The state pays a total of £42 million towards the holidays, an average of £90 per pensioner. Each holidaymaker then pays up to £120 for an all-inclusive week in a hotel.

tor general of tourism for the Balearic Islands said: "There are 60 million people over the age of 60 in the Community, many of whom are below the poverty line and never take a holiday. There are also hundreds of hotels which are closed during the off-peak season. This scheme not only gives pensioners a chance to enjoy a break but, if it were generally accepted, would help the tourism industry throughout Europe."

Roger de Haan, the chairman of Saga Holidays, the British tour operator which has virtually cornered the "grey" market, is enthusiastic about the idea. "Forty per cent of people over the age of 60 now never travel and if there was some means of targeting the less well-off it would improve the quality of life of the elderly."

A European-wide conference aimed at producing a detailed proposal for ministers to consider concluded that: "The European Union cannot turn its back on this opportunity to create employment without requiring additional funding that also considerably improves the wellbeing of the elderly population."

Britain remains officially sceptical of the scheme, however, because it claims it is designed mainly to benefit Mediterranean countries with a natural tourism infrastructure.

"I can see how thousands of British pensioners would want to flock to Spanish beaches, but I can't see the Spanish wanting to come to our seaside in February," said one official.

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Dubai	£270	
Jakarta	£270	
Cebu	£270	
Manila	£270	
Seoul	£270	
Beijing	£270	
Manila	£27	

EC plans cheap trips for oldies

THE TIMES THURSDAY JANUARY 11 1996

Eurostar cuts Paris fare to £69

By Jonathan Prynn

THE price of a return Eurostar rail ticket to Paris tumbled to £69 this week to mark the start of high-speed train services from Ashford International station in Kent.

The new fare, which is available to passengers on the day of travel, brings the cost of journeys to Paris in line with tickets on the less popular Brussels route. Paris had previously been £7 more expensive than the Belgian capital at £76. The only requirement is that passengers stay at least one Saturday night or three other nights in Paris. The day return price remains at £95.

The new fare, which is almost certain to be followed by further reductions this year as competition with the airlines intensifies, came the day after the start of Eurostar services from Ashford. The new 1996 Eurostar timetable shows nine departures a day from the Kent terminal, five to Paris and four to Brussels, with seven inbound services from the Continent.

The new timetable brings the centre of the French capital within a two-hour train ride for passengers starting their journeys in Ashford with trips to Brussels taking two and a quarter hours. Prices are the same as for departures from London.

The timetable also features a new early morning departure for Paris aimed at the business market. It leaves Waterloo International at 6.19am, calls at Ashford an hour later and arrives in Paris

Gard du Nord at 10.24am. It is aimed at countering criticism from British business executives that Eurostar could not deliver them to Paris in time for morning meetings.

European Passenger Services (EPS), the operator of Eurostar, is in the vanguard of the movement to bring British clocks in line with the Continent, partly because its early morning services would become far more competitive with the airlines (see below).

The opening of Ashford marks the start of a crucial year for Eurostar. The next 12 months will see the future ownership of EPS decided by the Government and the start of through trains to the provinces of Britain.

Direct services from Paris and Brussels to Birmingham and Manchester and Glasgow on the West Coast main line and to Edinburgh on the East Coast main line are expected to commence this summer. Testing of the Eurostar trains that will be used for these services has already started, although the timetable has been set back by the recent strikes in France.

However, the schedule for the introduction of overnight services from London and the regions to France, Belgium, Germany and Holland, has been more seriously delayed because the sleeper trains are now not expected to be delivered by Metro Cammell, their manufacturer, in time for the original planned starting date later this year.



Direct rail journeys from London to Disneyland Paris could be running by summer

Disney launches Waterloo link

By David Churchill

EURO DISNEY is planning to run a direct Eurostar rail service from Waterloo to its French theme park, now known as Disneyland Paris.

The service, using special trains featuring Disney characters, is part of a major promotional push by the theme park, including a new television campaign which starts next month.

Last week the company opened its first dedicated UK reservations office. "We expect calls to reach 5,000 a day once the television advertising starts," says Mr William Jones, the managing director for Disneyland Paris in London.

Negotiations to operate the rail link are still taking place with Eurostar, but Disney is confident that it will be able to start selling rail packages after Easter, with the service likely to start midsummer.

At present, Disney-bound passengers on the Brussels Eurostar have to change at Lille to catch a high-speed TGV train to the theme park, so the new direct link will cut the journey time significantly. Euro Disney expects to have sufficient demand to charter

the trains from Eurostar, enabling it to "customise" each service with Disney characters. The frequency and cost of the service has yet to be finalised.

Mr Jones is optimistic that the theme park will continue to make the progress of last year when the number of visitors rose 25 per cent to 10.7 million. This was helped by admission price cuts and the opening of the Space Mountain rollercoaster ride. He reports that the current promotional offer, which enables children to travel and stay free when accompanied by adults, has meant weekend bookings from the UK until Easter are almost full.

Major developments this year will focus on the Festival Disney entertainment complex rather than the theme park itself. Festival Disney is due to open a Planet Hollywood restaurant later this year, along with an eight-screen cinema. A new show to alternate with the popular Buffalo Bill dinner attraction is also being considered. This year's Disney animated film, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, will also be premiered in Paris.

But while Euro Disney has apparently shrugged off its early problems, a report into European theme parks suggests that many smaller congenial parks suffered last year from the impact of the long, hot summer.

William Richards, director of the travel consultancy Tourism Research and Marketing which has just published its sixth annual report on international theme parks, says: "While the overall number of theme park visitors rose in Europe last year because of the opening of Port Aventura in Spain — it attracted some 2.7 million visitors — the year-on-year trading for a number of parks, especially in the Benelux countries, was down because the hot weather kept people away."

Many UK theme and leisure parks reportedly faced similar problems, especially those based near seaside resorts or with a significant number of indoor attractions.

* International Theme Parks is available from 115, Harrington Rd, London SW8 2HB. Price £35

Ferries declare war

By Steve Keenan

CUSTOMERS are the biggest winners as rail and ferry operators slash prices in the battle for business on routes across the English Channel, the Irish Sea and the North Sea.

Ferry companies' profits slumped in 1995 after the opening of the Channel Tunnel despite an increase of 7 per cent in passenger traffic — 13.5 million return journeys were made on 58,000 Channel crossings.

Eurostar applied more pressure this week by cutting its cheapest fare. (The cheapest British Airways World Offer fare is £66.60.) And Le Shuttle has extended a 20 per cent discount offer for travel up to 60 days in advance until March 31.

There is also competition from a new ferry operator, Sea France, on the Dover-Calais route. Brittany Ferries is offering 25 per cent

off bookings made before January 31 for any journey this year. This reduces the price of the Portsmouth-Caen crossing in August for a car and up to eight passengers from £275 to £204.75.

Stena Line is offering a 20 per cent discount to Calais, Dieppe, Cherbourg and Hook of Holland for bookings made by January 31. Hoverspeed is cutting 60 per cent off its price for Dover-Calais for bookings made by February 28.

Stena is also offering a 20 per cent discount on the Fishguard-Rosslare route across the Irish Sea, forcing Irish Ferries to cut its return fare on the same route from £328 to £258 for bookings made by January 31.

North Sea Ferries has cut the cost of a cabin and car for four from £506 to £385 in peak season.

Two famous leisure attractions get a change of style

Activity drive by Butlin's

By Helen Conway

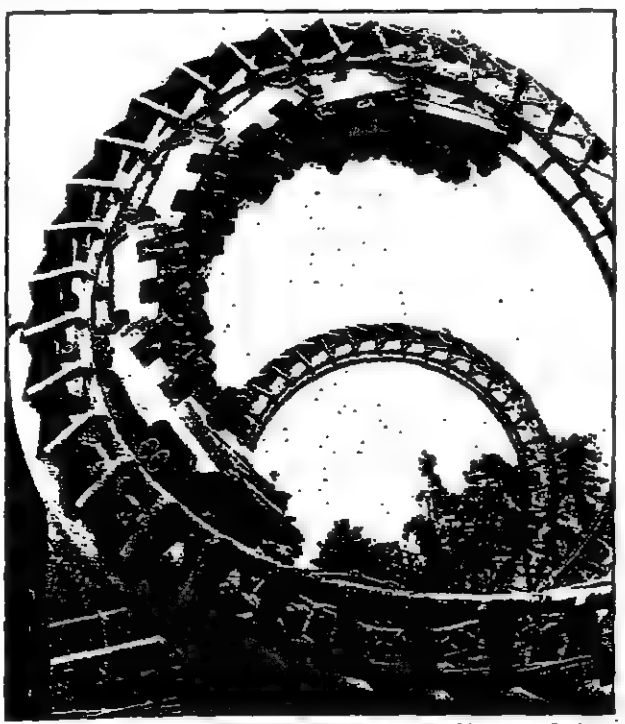
SIXTY years after opening its first holiday camp at Skegness, Butlin's is setting its sights on attracting a more up-market clientele to its centres. For this summer, the company has launched a new multi-activity programme called Leisure Pursuits, which plays down the Butlin's connection for fear it may prove a turn-off for some people.

A brochure has been produced featuring 12 different activities including abseiling, canoeing, orienteering and windsurfing, as well as more unusual activities like dragon boating and hovercrafting.

Accommodation for the whole programme is based at the five Butlin's holiday worlds in the UK: Somerwest World in Minehead, Southcoast World in Bognor Regis, Starcoast World in Pwllheli, Funcoast World in Skegness and Wonderwest World on the Scottish coast at Ayr.

However, while the traditional Butlin's holiday programme encourages holidaymakers to stay on-site and make full use of the sub-tropical waterworlds, fountains and other leisure facilities, all the activities in Leisure Pursuits take place outside.

Holidaymakers can choose just to use the facilities for sleeping and book the activities package with self-catering arrangements. Prices start at £74 per person for a three-night break with self-catering accommodation and £200 per person for a week's holiday, including 11 activities.



Alton Towers will soon have sponsored accommodation

Sweet-dreams hotel

A NEW hotel at Alton Towers will have rooms sponsored by chocolate and soft-drink manufacturers, offering unlimited supplies of their products, Steve Keenan writes.

Cadbury's is sponsoring a room with a chocolate dispenser and boxes designed like chocolate bars, a TV set like a box of Roses and chairs replicating melted chocolate.

Another room is to be sponsored by Coca Cola, who will also supervise the decor. It is the first time private firms have sponsored rooms in a UK hotel, and follows the success of the Walt Disney Company in separately theming its six hotels at Disneyland Paris.

The rooms will cost around

£200 for a family of six per night. The other 171 rooms in the themed hotel, to open on March 16, will cost families of four £100 a night. Each has a "secret" drawer for children to discover.

The £20 million hotel will also have a reception desk created from lost luggage and an old-fashioned gift shop. A plan to include a resident teddy bear in each room was shelved because the company feared huge losses.

Around 17 per cent of visitors to Alton Towers stay overnight. It is also hoping to attract themed business conferences. The park had 180,000 corporate visitors last year and will be able to host conferences for 180.

Airlines fight daylight Bill

By Harvey Elliott

HOLIDAY flight schedules could be thrown into chaos if Britain adopts "daylight extra" and moves to a common central European time, according to charter airlines.

Despite strong backing from most of the British tourist industry for a Private Member's Bill proposing the switch, charter airlines fear that it would lead either to a sharp increase in night flights or to British flights being crowded out of holiday airports at peak times.

Supporters of John Butler's British Time (Extra Daylight) Bill, which is scheduled for a second reading on January 19, last night briefed MPs on potential benefits of an additional hour of daylight.

But airlines fear that not enough attention has been paid to resolving initial problems involved in the switch. Holidaymakers could face higher prices, confusion and even wholesale cancellations if it goes ahead, they say.

The problem revolves around take-off and landing slot times, which are negotiated internationally in Greenwich Mean Time. This means that a summer charter flight which leaves Gatwick, for example, at 0700 local time is using a slot negotiated for 0600 GMT. When the extra daylight hour is introduced, 0700 would become 0800 local. But the slot time would remain as 0600 GMT.

The airline would, therefore, have the option of either staying with the existing GMT slot and making the take off time 0800 local or keeping the 0700 local take off schedule and renegotiating the GMT

BARGAINS OF THE WEEK

SKI holiday bargains and information on late bookings available from more than 20 tour operators are being collated by Connect France, which promises discounts of up to 40 per cent and £200 this month. Details: 0500 456645.

A WEEK in Majorca for £99, leaving Cardiff Airport on Monday is available from Cosmos. A fortnight costs £40 more. Details: 0161-480 5799.

MIDDLE EAST city breaks are being offered by Kuoni, including Cairo for three nights for £385 per person and Dubai for £485.

HOLIDAYS

Prices include scheduled flights and a local excursion. Details: 01306 744477.

SAVINGS of £40 to £100 are available on holidays in Egypt, leaving Heathrow or Manchester on January 18 or 22, with Longwood Holidays. Details: 0181-551 4494.

FLORIDA Magic is offering free child places on some holidays until February 4, providing each child is accompanied by two adults. They will pay from £339 per person for return flights, three nights at a Best West-

ern hotel and four days hire. Details: 0645 747757.

SAVINGS of £100 per person are being offered by The Imaginative Travel for its 19-day fully-escorted China tour leaving Peking March 10. The all-inclusive price will still be close to £2,000 per person. Details: 0181-742 8612.

LAS VEGAS can be reached non-stop from Gatwick from Monday when Unijet launches its inaugural service. Combined with new flights are week-long holidays starting from £299 per person. Details: 01444 459191.

HOTELS

featuring favourite love songs. Details: 0345 581595.

TRAVEL INN, the budget hotel chain owned by Whitbread, yesterday opened its 100th UK hotel on the waterfront at Salford Quays, Manchester. The 52-room hotel has a fixed rate of £35.50 a room a night. Next door is a Beefeater restaurant and pub. Details: 01582 413431.

JAKE'S HOTEL on Jamaica's south coast has been voted the "best hotel under £100 a night" in the 1996 Tatler Cunard travel guide awards. Room rates at the hotel, part of the Island Outpost group of Caribbean and Florida hotels, start at

\$75 (about £50) a night up to April 15, then drop to \$50 a night until December. Details: 0800 614 790.

CHILDREN under 13 can now stay and eat free at a 65-strong Forte Posthous chain when accompanying their parents on Leisure Breaks packages. Children can either eat from a special menu or have half portions from the main menu. Details: 0345 404040.

ONLY one in every three hotels now offers guests "turn-down" service (turning back the bed covers), according to a survey. Horwath UK, a hotel consultancy. But more than half of hotels surveyed provide non-smoking rooms. Horwath: 0171-353 5380.

FLIGHTS

Air from next Thursday until the end of February will be upgraded at no extra cost. Details: 0171-408 1717.

UNITED'S "Fare of the Year" promotion provides a return business class flight from London to New York or Washington for £1,996, a saving of £350. Details: 0181-990 9900.

AIR UK has extended the validity of its £299 three-day and £249 day return tickets between Stansted and Copen-

hagen, Florence, Hamburg, Madrid, Munich and Zurich. Details: 0345 666777.

EXECUTIVE Club members flying British Airways Milan from London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester earn double Air Miles on business class flights taken before the end of February. Details: 099 322322.

MANX Airlines has launched a Club Sovereign frequent flyer scheme. Benefits include free flights on airport lounge access. Details: 0345 262626.

FERRIES

HOVERSPED has a standby fare, until January 31, on its Dover-Calais SeaCat service of £10 a car and £1 each passenger. Foot passengers £2. Details: 01304 240241.

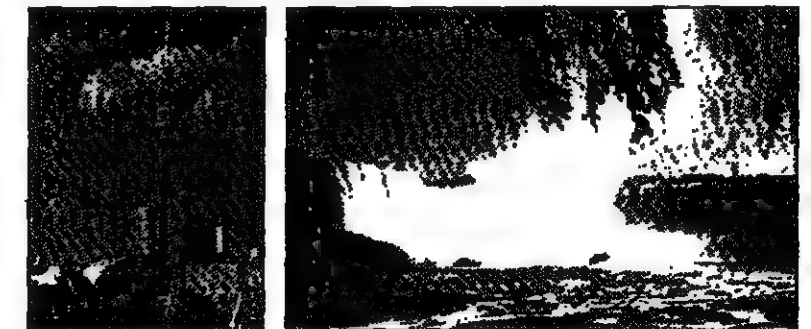
SALLY Ferries is quoting a Winter Saver fare of £50, until March 31, for a five-day return for a car and up to five passengers (£99 standard return) on its Ramsgate routes to Dunkirk and Ostend. Details: 01843 595566.

EURODRIVE quotes day-trips on Sally Ferries Rams-

gate routes at £10 per car plus five people, £39 for five days. Hoversped five-day return at £59 for car plus five passengers (£85 standard return). Both sets of fares valid until March 31. Stena Line routes to Calais, Dieppe and Cherbourg sell for £39 (three day return), £49 (five day) and £69 standard, all for car plus five. Bookings by February 15 for travel by April. Details: 0181 342 8979.

SCANDANAVIAN Seaways is offering 50 per cent off fares from Harwich either to Hamburg, Esbjerg, Gothenburg on selected dates until March 15. Details: 0990 333000.

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Smith may be promoted to opener

Stewart threatened by England's search for order

FROM SIMON WILDE IN BLOEMFONTEIN

ENGLAND'S cricketers arrived here yesterday with their morale as low as it has been since they began their tour of South Africa 12 weeks ago after their capitulation in the first one-day international on Tuesday night.

The only relief for the tour management is that the team has been bidden farewell to Cape Town, where it lost three matches that appeared to be in the bag and, in the frank assessment of Raymond Illingworth, the manager, yesterday, the players lost focus and commitment because of the presence of their families.

England postponed until this morning announcing their team for the second in the series of seven one-day internationals here this afternoon, but changes are almost certain, possibly radical ones. Fielding a team packed with limited-overs factors, as England did on Tuesday, is sound enough in theory, but if, in practice, they fail under pressure, it is dangerously flawed.

After just one match, England are seriously considering abandoning this strategy and again altering the balance of their side. There appear to be two alternatives open to them. One is to bring in a sixth batsman, perhaps Rampersad, at the expense of an all-rounder, possibly White rather than Reeve, whose lack of match practice is likely to act in his defence. The other is more dramatic: to bring in Robin Smith as an opener, play Russell as wicketkeeper and to drop Stewart.

Stewart has been an integral member of England's one-day side for several years, but, recently, his technique has looked increasingly unconvincing in all international matches. Smith, though not the best of fielders, has an

outstanding one-day record, with as many hundreds for England to his credit as the rest of the party combined.

The manager's assessment of the defeat on Tuesday was damning. "We made mistakes that you do not expect professionals to make," he said. "We've got to get back our discipline. There have been a lot of distractions. A lot of people have been around and it's been very busy."

"I would agree that the players have not been as



Reeve lack of practice

focused in the last week or so as in the first part of the tour. It is difficult when families and friends are here. It is a contentious issue and I do not know what the answer is. Perhaps they should come out earlier, at a quieter period of the tour." The mood of Michael Atherton, the captain, was no less sombre. "We did pretty well to lose," he said.

"I thought it was a game we should have won, but we gave away 17 extras and dropped Pollock with a fairly easy chance. We would have settled for chasing 180, but it should have been 180." From 155 for three, England collapsed to 205 all out to lose by six runs.

Hansie Cronje, the South Africa captain, confirmed that his side had been in an almost hopeless position. "It was a case of they lost it rather than we won it," he said. "At the second drinks break [taken shortly before England's collapse], we had a very, very slim chance to win and thought we would just wait, be calm and see what happened. Shaun Pollock and Allan Donald came back and were very positive."

In the closing stages, the contrast could not have been more stark. South Africa bowled and fielded tigerishly and held on to every chance: the England lower order froze from the moment Fairbrother drove loosely into the hands of mid-on. "There are a lot of areas to tighten up," Atherton said. "We need to find our best combination. We need some cool heads under pressure."

Although Richard Illingworth, their first-choice slow bowler, is not quite recovered from his strained side, England remain keen to field one specialist spinner in each match, even though Atherton gave Neil Smith only two overs in Cape Town.

One thing, at least, about the match on Tuesday cheered Atherton — the prodigality of the early South Africa batsmen, who threw away wickets like confetti. "If South Africa continue to play like that, I will be surprised if we do not beat them," he said. Unfortunately for the England captain, rarely have the past few weeks well to lose, he said.

□ The stadium in the Indian city of Nagpur, near Bombay, where a wall collapsed killing ten spectators during an international match in November, was yesterday confirmed as the venue for the Australia-Zimbabwe match in the World Cup on March 1.



She may have been away from the game since September, but the grimaces and fiercely-driven, double-handed shots were as familiar as ever when Monica Seles returned to tournament tennis yesterday. Despite a brief attack of nerves, the world's joint-No 1, whose last match was in losing to Steffi Graf in the final of the US Open, was quickly into her stride, dismissing Dominique Monami, of Belgium, 6-1, 6-2 in 55 one-sided minutes in the second round of the Peters International event in Sydney. However, although Seles was the main attraction at the White City courts, Greg Rusedski, of

Great Britain, was the day's outstanding performer. The Canadian-born British No 1, who beat Richard Krajicek, of Holland, the No 2 seed, on Tuesday, thrashed Carsten Arriens, of Germany, 6-0, 6-0 in a line less than 20 minutes in his second-round match, serving ten aces and dropping just six points in each set. It is believed to be the fastest win at the tournament in the modern era. Tim Henman, Britain's other representative, will not be joining Rusedski in the quarter-finals. Henman lost 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 to Mark Woodforde, of Australia, the experienced left-hander.

Ruling on Modahl case is imminent

BY JOHN GOODBODY

DIANE MODAHL has cleared another hurdle in the battle to prove her innocence on drug-taking charges. Sources at the International Amateur Athletic Federation said yesterday that there had been a "misunderstanding" and that the 1990 Commonwealth 800 metres champion was eligible to run anywhere in the world until an arbitration panel settled the dispute.

That settlement could come within the next two weeks, Vicente Modahl, the athlete's husband, said. "This is great news, but why do they not just admit they cannot prove a case against her?" he asked.

It was previously thought that Modahl could run in British domestic meetings but not internationally until the arbitration panel reached a verdict. Tony Ward, the British Athletic Federation (BAF) spokesman, said: "We are a bit surprised it has come out like this, but we are nevertheless delighted for Diane."

Modahl has been battling to prove her innocence since she was sent back from the Commonwealth Games in August 1994 after a urine sample taken at a meeting in Lisbon two months earlier produced an unacceptably high testosterone-epitestosterone ratio. A BAF disciplinary committee concluded that Modahl must have taken the male hormone, testosterone, which helps competitors to recover quickly.

However, last July, a BAF appeal panel upheld her claim that her urine sample had not been refrigerated for about 40 hours before being transferred to the Portuguese laboratory for analysis and that the contamination may have given rise to a false result. Two scientists confirmed this possibility.

The IAAF has described this view as "a remote theory" and asked for the case to be heard by an arbitration panel, due to convene in Monte Carlo in the near future. Its decision will finally determine whether Modahl, 29, should face a four-year ban from the sport.

Syed sets off for Atlanta

MATTHEW SYED, of Great Britain, took his first steps towards the Olympic Games in Atlanta this summer with a straight-games victory on the opening day of the Olympic table tennis qualifying competition at the Nynex Arena, Manchester, yesterday (Richard Eaton writes). Syed beat Taric Hodzic, of Bosnia, 22-20, 21-9, 21-10, recovering from 9-14 down in the first game and saving two game-points at 18-20 before imposing himself. Andrea Holt, England's other No 1, beat Tatiana Stoflat, of Israel, 21-11, 21-13, 21-19.

Bidding begins

Olympic Games: Eleven cities have made formal applications to stage the 2004 summer Olympic Games. They are Athens, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Istanbul, Lille, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, San Juan (Puerto Rico), Seville, Stockholm and St Petersburg. □ A consortium backed by The News Corporation, parent company of The Times, is bidding about £1.3 billion for the European rights to screen the winter and summer Olympics between 2000 and 2008, according to Sydney Olympic officials yesterday.

Richards out

Bowling: England's indoor selectors have left out Wynne Richards, the No 9 seed in the world indoor championships in Preston next month, in their attempt to wrest the Hilton Trophy from Scotland. There are three new caps in the 28-strong party — Stuart Airey, John Leeman and Paul Bennett.

Double top

Real tennis: Chris Bray and Mike Gooding, the favourites, won the BNB Resources British professional doubles championship, beating Nick Wood, of Hampton Court, and Adam Phillips, of Hatfield, the No 3 seeds, 6-2, 6-4, 6-2, 6-1 in the final.

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NORTHERN IRELAND

BELFAST, City Gym, Wellington Place, 01232 327231

NORTH EAST

GARFORTH, LivingWell at Hilton, Garforth, Leeds 0113 2876444; GRIMSBY, Millfields Health Club, Bargate, 01472 358068; HULL, The Metropolitan Club, Kingston Park, 01482 321181; LEEDS, LivingWell at Hilton, Neville Street, 0113 2445443; NEWCASTLE, Waves HC, Quayside, 0191 222 0333; LivingWell HC, Carliol Square, 0191 230 2717

NORTH WEST

MANCHESTER, LivingWell HC, Quay Street, M3, 0161 839 0606; Copthorne Hotel, Salford Quays, 0161 873 7321

MIDLANDS

BIRMINGHAM, LivingWell HC, Priory Queensway, B4, 0121 238 7789; HATTONS HC, Paradise Circus, 0121 209 2727; David Lloyd, Shady Lane, 0121 325 0700; BURTON ON TRENT, Moseley Fitness Centre, Moseley Street, 01283 533600; COVENTRY, LivingWell at Hilton, Walsgrave Triangle, 01203 841019; DUDLEY, Crystals HC, Brierley Hill, 01384 482882; LOCKINGTON, LivingWell at Hilton, Derby Rd, 01509 674 166; MILTON KEYNES, LivingWell HC, Avebury Boulevard, 01908 668286; LIVINGWELL at Hilton, Timbold Drive, 01908 240422; WARWICK, LivingWell at Hilton, Junction 15 M40, 01926 493700

WALES

CARDIFF, David Lloyd, Ipswich Road, 01222 460046; Waves HC, Copthorne Way, 01222 599139; The Metropolitan Club, Ocean Way, 01222 456000

GREATER LONDON

PORTLAND PLACE, LivingWell at Hilton, London W1, 0171 636 1000

WESTMINSTER, LivingWell Health Club, Millbank, London SW1, 0171 233 3579; PARK LANE, LivingWell HC, London W1, 0171 629 6974; BLOOMSBURY, Mecklenburgh HC, London WC1, 0171 813 0555; ISLE OF DOGS, Arena Racquet & Sports Club, London E14, 0171 515 8940; CITY OF LONDON, Esplanade HC, Royal Mint Court, EC3, 0171 488 1222; Esplanade HC, Tudor Street, EC4, 0171 867 1222; Broadgate Club, Exchange Place, 0171 375 2464; BLOOMSBURY, Physique, Judd Street, London WC1, 0171 837 8880; TUFNELL PARK, Maximum Fitness, Fortessa Road, London NW5, 0171 482 334; BARBICAN, Holmes Place, London EC1, 0171 374 0091; BATTERSEA, The Metropolitan Club, Sheepcote Lane, SW11, 0171 226 4400; CHELSEA, Holmes Place, London SW10, 0171 352 9452; WEST END, The Metropolitan Club, Kingly Street, W1, 0171 734 5002; OXFORD STREET, Holmes Place, London W1, 0171 436 0500; FULHAM, The Metropolitan Club, North End Road, SW6, 0171 810 1410; EALING, Holmes Place, London W5, 0171 579 9433; MUSWELL HILL, Laboratory Spa and HC, The Avenue, London N10, 0181 482 3000; HOUNSLOW, David Lloyd HC, Southall Lane, 0181 573 9378; ENFIELD, David Lloyd HC, Caterhatch Lane, 0181 364 5858; CROYDON, The Surrey Club, Hannibal Way, 0181 681 1331;



LivingWell at Hilton, Purley Way 0181 667 4444; KINGSTON, Holmes Place, Wood St, Surrey, 0181 549 7700; WANDSWORTH, The Metropolitan Club, Burr Road, SW18, 0181 874 1155; EASTERN AVENUE, Dragons, Rowdell Rd, 0181 841 5611; EWELL, Dragons, Ruxley Lane, Surrey, 0181 393 6011; RICHMOND, Pinnacle, Kew Foot Rd, 0181 332 7185; NORBURY, Pinnacle, London Road, 0181 576 2225; SUTTON & CHEAM, Pinnacle, Gander Green Lane, 0181 681 9862; WEMBLEY, LivingWell at Hilton, Empire Way, 0181 795 4118; TWICKENHAM, The Metropolitan Club Cranford Way, 0181 882 2251

SOUTH EAST

GATWICK, LivingWell at Hilton, Gatwick Airport, 01293 527261; WATFORD, LivingWell at Hilton, Eltham Way, 01923 210247; READING, David Lloyd, Thames Valley Park Drive 01734 662904; EASTBOURNE, David Lloyd, Broadwater Way, 01323 509953; WEST BYFLEET, Pinnacle, Pyrford Road, 01932 351835; ST ALBANS, Pinnacle, Cell Barnes Lane, 01727 869081; WINDSOR, Pinnacle, Helston Lane, 01753 832935; HOVE, Dragons, St Heliers Ave, 01273 724211; GUILDFORD, Dragons, Epsom Road, 01483 458811; WOKING, Chris Lane Tennis & Country Club, Westfield Ave, 01483 722113; CRAWLEY, Copthorne The Club, Copthorne Road, 01342 715022; GRAWLEY, P.J.s, Copthorne, 01342 714994; SLOUGH, Waves, Cippenham Lane, 01753 516222

SOUTH WEST

CHARLWORTH, LivingWell at Hilton, Becken Place, SOUTHAMPTON, 01703 766926; SWINDON, LivingWell at Hilton, Great Western Way, 01793 410937; BOURNEMOUTH, David Lloyd, Kneale Road, 01202 394333; RINGWOOD, David Lloyd, Christchurch Road, 01425 470101; PLYMOUTH, Plymsoles, Armada Way, 01752 224161; PORTSMOUTH, The Metropolitan Club, Alexandra Park, 01705 664748



No pain no gain: benefit from a work-out with hi-tech fitness equipment

RULES AND CONDITIONS

1. Collect four of the six tokens appearing in The Times until Saturday January 13 and attach them to the voucher, left.
2. To book your day of health and fitness, telephone the club of your choice from those listed, quoting this offer. Your visit must be arranged in advance by telephone.
3. The voucher is only valid for one visit to one club and entitles you to a gift of a free Nautilus Activity Assessment Wheel.
4. The voucher must be presented to the club when you visit. The bearer will be entitled to use the club's facilities for the day free.
5. The offer is valid until February 29, 1996.
6. The voucher also entitles the bearer to be entered into a free prize draw, with the chance to win a year's free membership of that club.
7. The offer is subject to availability at the time of advance booking.
8. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer.
9. There may be additional charges if you wish to book beauty treatments. It is advisable to confirm what facilities are included in the offer at the time of booking.

THE SCIENCE OF AGELESS AGEING: SEE PAGES 14 AND 15

Minton's a

WINCANTON

Pearce fined

ROA takes dim view of spoiling tactics

Minton, a National Hunt stalwart, has purchased six subsequent Triumph Hurdle winners

Owners and breeders were granted VAT concessions amounting to £20 million in exchange for their commitment to attracting sponsorship. Some £2.7 million has been generated since the scheme was launched 17 months ago, but the concession is up for review by Customs & Excise any time from March.

2.20 COWTHORPE HANDICAP HURDLE

1	0-34	SWEET MIGNONETTE 75 (D.F.B.F.)	Mrs. M. Revelay 2-12-0	G. Cuthill 77	85
2	10-0	GOLDEN HELLO 40 (D.F.B.F.)	M. H. Eastman 5-12-0	1. Wyer 64	
3	0-30	NOYAN 88 (D.F.B.F.)	0. Kuchel 6-11-1	5. Mason 80	
4	5-00	WILLOW WAGON 26 (C.D.F.S.)	G. M. Ainsley 7-11-1	1. P. Jones 81	
5	0-46	FRICKLEY 26 (D.G.S.)	F. Murphy 10-11-7	1. P. Catterby 87	
6	5-55	BRAMBLEBERRY 33 (C.D.G.S.)	Mrs. S. Strawn 7-11-1	9. G. Guest 80	
7	0-20	NEW THAI 40 (D.S.)	G. Sollings 5-11-1	4. Maguon 88	
8	22-0	HIGH ROAD 266 (D.F.B.F.)	S. W. Whitton 2-11-0	2. R. Johnson 83	
9	62-13	FLUJIA 37 (D.F.B.F.)	N. Henderson 5-11-0	1. J. R. Kavanagh 87	
10	3-16	TEST MATCH 58 (D.F.B.F.)	S. M. W. Clark 9-11-0	6. Lee Lewis 83	

12	F4-P	FLAT TOP 28 (S) M W Eastern 5-10-8	...	J Garmley	85
13	28-B	TWIN FALLS 26 (G) G Moore 5-10-5	...	J Callaghan	81
14	30-F	SHARKASHKA 33 (F.G) M H Eastern 6-10-8	A Dobbin	82

[illegible]

3	5434	STRONG DEEL 8 (D,B,F,G,S) W Reed 8-11-8	1 Read	97
4	17-4	OVER THE POLE 50 (B,F,G) J Grider 9-11-3	NON-RUNNER	88

[illegible]

trained gelding with heat 122 in the York Gold Trophy at Newbury on February 10.

2.00 TALISMAN HANDICAP (\$2,977: 1m 2f) (14)

1	01-0	WET PATCH 5 (C.D.F.)	R Hannon 4-10-0	Mark Desaro (7) 1
2	004	QUEENS STROLLER 45 (G)	1 Wolf 5-9-11	P McCabe (3) 2
3	04-1	RIVAL BID 7 (C.D.F.G.S)	Mrs N Macauley 6-9-11	(Se)
				T Ashley (7) 3
4	01-0	LANDLORD 7 (R.C.D.F.)	J Toller 4-9-0	J Wrenner 5
5	20-0	LANDRA 9 S Dow 4-4-5		W Woods 8
6	1/2	EXPLOSIVE POWER 24 (C.G.)	G Boney 5-5-5	T Mes 7

9	00-3	TOMAL 7 (F) R Ingram 4-8-8	W Newnes 13
10	00-4	DOZLEM 27 (B,F) J Poulton 7-8-8	S Sanders 12
11	00-5	THE MESTRAL 28 M Ryan 4-8-3	G Bardwell 8

[illegible]

3.30 IVANHOE HANDICAP (£2,799; 1m 5f) (10)

1	411-	BROUGHTONS FOUILLAU 2-3 (C.D.F.)	W Mouton 5-0-3
			P. McNamee (C)
2	10-5	DWARKE 9 (F) Humes 5-9-10	A Macleary 7
3	10-5	DODDIE 10 (F) Rovers 4-2 (V.A.R.)	H. Rothmann 4-3-3
4	10-5	RED SPEDALS 3 (R.S.)	W. H. Smith 4-0-0
5	12-6	ERIKSON 7 (G.O.F.)	M. Auld 3-1-3
6	10-1	ERIKSON 7 (G.O.F.)	M. Auld 4-8-8
7	00-1	ERIKSON 7 (G.O.F.)	M. Auld 4-8-8
8	00-1	ERIKSON 7 (G.O.F.)	M. Auld 4-8-8
9	00-1	WOTTASHAMBERS 9 (C.D.F.)	J. Montague Hall 5-6-5 (F)
			J.F. Egan 6
10	22-0	LUNAR RICK 47-1 (F) Miles B Sanders 6-8-1	G Carter 5
11	22-0	WATTASHAMBERS 9 (C.D.F.)	J. Montague Hall 5-6-5 (F)
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100

Celtic stand firm in battle with bigotry

By Kevin McCarron

CELTIC yesterday engaged in a struggle that will be even more prolonged and arduous than the quest for the Scottish League premier division title. The club has committed itself to confronting the sectarianism that is intertwined with football in the west of Scotland.

A social charter, in draft form, has been issued in which Celtic pledge to carry out charitable work and oppose all forms of discrimination. A statement of worthy aims is easy to produce, but the biggest elements in Glasgow are obdurate. The club, though, has already proved that there will be deeds as well as emollient words.

Before the Old Firm match last week, Fergus McCann, the Celtic managing director, insisted upon a minute's silence for the 66 Rangers supporters who were killed in the Ibrox disaster 25 years ago. Attempts had been made to dissuade McCann by figures from both clubs who felt that supporters should not be trusted to respect the memory of the dead.

New arrival Charnley set for ban

DUNDEE are set to lose Chic Charnley, their midfield player, for three games after he was dismissed for the twelfth time in his career on Tuesday night — just days after joining the club.

Charnley was ordered off for an elbowing offence after 67 minutes of the Tayside derby, Dundee United, who also had a player — Steven Pressley — sent off, won the match at Dens Park 2-0, thanks to two goals from Robbie Winters, to go top of the first division.

Charnley, who moved from Dumbarton for a cut-price £25,000 and scored on his debut last weekend in a 2-1 win over Hamilton, will be automatically suspended for the trip to Greenock Morton on Saturday.

He will also receive a two-match ban, effective from January 23, that will rule him out of the Tennents Scottish Cup third-round trip to Brechin or Clyde and a league game, Jim Duffy, the Dundee manager, said: "His reputation goes before him. Anything he does is scrutinised."

McCann was adamant, nonetheless, that the plan must go ahead; and if the minute's silence was not observed by every spectator, only a small minority breached it. Celtic's announcement yesterday was a demonstration that they will not let any feelings of relief over that success persuade them now to drop the entire matter.

The club is prepared to ban from its ground supporters who indulge in sectarian chants and other offensive behaviour. "If people are abusive," McCann said, "it should be possible to identify them by their seat numbers and, at the very least, prevent them from renewing their season tickets."

"We can only do so much when it comes to changing the minds of mindless individuals, but it is up to us to try. We can't ignore it and say, 'This is just how we live'."

McCann is particularly sensitive to the issue because, although born in Scotland, he lived in Canada for almost 30 years before buying Celtic in 1994. The intolerance of life in the west of Scotland clearly struck him anew.

The programme set out by Celtic, however, does not concentrate solely on behaviour within the ground, but proposes a series of initiatives. Players, for example, will visit a range of schools chosen to ensure that they meet and coach children from a variety of ethnic groups. The club's charitable work will also include organising holidays for disadvantaged Protestant and Catholic children in Northern Ireland.

Celtic's practice of flying the flag of Ireland is regarded as inflammatory in some quarters and the club was even prevented from doing so when it spent last season based at the Queen's Park ground, Hampden Park.

McCann, though, is insistent that a recognition of the club's roots in the Irish immigrant community should be regarded only as a positive step rather than a provocative gesture.

The other half of the Old Firm was engaged in more familiar business yesterday. Jari, of Grêmio, the Brazilian striker, visited Ibrox and a £2.5 million transfer to Rangers will be concluded if he can acquire a Portuguese passport. That would remove the need for a work permit, which players from outside the European Union require.



Wales hope Hughes' inimitable brand of aggression in attack will trouble the illustrious defenders of Italy

Hughes receives welcome back as Wales take on the Italians

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

BOBBY GOULD, the Wales football manager, has included Mark Hughes in his squad to face Italy in Terni on January 24, ending what appeared to be a brief feud between the two men. The Chelsea forward's international career looked to be over when he declined to travel to Albania for Wales's final European championship qualifier in November, but Gould made it clear yesterday that there are no ill-feelings.

"I haven't spoken to Mark and he'll find out that he's in the squad when he reads his name on Teletext," Gould said, "but, as far as I'm concerned, everything else that has happened is water under the bridge."

The 17-man squad — another name will be added before the players fly to Rome on January 21 — contains eight of the team that drew 1-1 in Tirana, including Mark Pembroke, who scored the Wales goal in that game, who has missed Sheffield Wednesday's past nine matches with a

foot injury. He is expected to recover in time.

In addition to Hughes, seven of the players who were forced to withdraw from the game in Albania are named in the party. Three of them — Adrian Williams, of Reading, Kit Symons, of Manchester City, and Chris Coleman, of Blackburn Rovers — are central defenders, while the others are Barry Horne, Gary Speed, Ian Rush and Nathan Blake. Rush scored the only goal when Wales and Italy last met, in Brescia in 1988.

There is one new face, Darren Ward, the Notts County goalkeeper, who will under study Neville Southall. "Andrew Marriott's playing for Wrexham that week and I've seen Danny Coyne at Tranmere," Gould said. "I wanted to have a look at Darren."

However, Eric Young, of Wolverhampton Wanderers, and Gareth Taylor, of Crystal Palace, are only in the standby pool of eight, while there is no place at all for Ceri Hughes, the Luton Town midfielder player. Gould also revealed that the

WALES SQUAD

N Southall (Everton), D Ward (Notts County), A Williams (Reading), K Symons (Manchester City), A Meville (Sunderland), S Jenkins (Huddersfield Town), M Bowen (Norwich City), D Phillips (Wolverhampton Wanderers), M Pennington (Sheffield Wednesday), G Speed (Luton Town), M Hughes (Chelsea), D Saunders (Colchester), N Blake (Blackburn Rovers), R Gigg (Manchester United), I Rush (Liverpool), C Coleman (Blackburn Rovers).

game had been hurriedly arranged. "I hadn't anticipated this fixture, but the Italians sent us a fax over Christmas offering the game," he said. "When I received it, I sounded out the players and they wanted the game to go ahead. In fact, when I told Barry Horne last night, his eyes lit up and that shows how much our players will value this opportunity."

Part of the deal struck with the Italians is that they will make a return visit to the Principality within the next 18 months — possibly shortly before they play England in the World Cup qualifiers. Gould also announced that his

side would be meeting another Mediterranean nation in March and playing Switzerland away in April.

One problem for the Welsh manager might be another spate of withdrawals, the game coming the week before the fourth round of the FA Cup and with any Coca-Cola Cup fifth-round replays scheduled for January 25, but Gould is hopeful that his plans will not be unduly hit.

"I'm sure some managers might be reluctant to release their players before the FA Cup, but I hope they understand my position," Gould said. "It's officially an international week after all. If our game was against another side, it would be a different kettle of fish, but I think I should be given the chance to take my players to play what is one of the very best sides in the world."

"It will be a great opportunity for the players, a great platform, because you don't get much bigger than Italy; but it's just as important for me because I want to get to know the players better."

Dominant Best helps W Indies put rest in perspective

From Mel Webb in Sharjah

TWO DAYS to go, and the gap between West Indies and the other three teams in the World Cricket Masters series here is widening into a potentially embarrassing chasm. The whipping boys yesterday were Pakistan, who were tested then thoroughly bested by Best, Carlisle Best, that is, who left them battered and hanging desperately on to the ropes with a majestic 155 not out.

Pakistan have been making their first appearance in this limited-overs over-35 tournament, and have proved that even cricketing senior citizens can still have things to learn about the game. England defeated them by 65 runs in the first match of the tournament and West Indies gave them a 116-run thumping yesterday.

Zaheer Abbas and his men have managed just one victory, but, since it was over India, that will almost be consolation enough. They could even do it again when they meet in the third-place play-off match today. They may be playing only for honour, but when these two come up against each other, honour is all that matters.

The game yesterday was cast out of the same mould as the previous five. The bowlers were little more than spear-carriers, willing and ready to beetle off when the scene-shifters with bats for rapier swaggers onto the stage.

Not, mind you, that there was anything very rapier-like about Best's innings, which beat Graham Gooch's 144 the day before as the innings of the series. There is nothing very rapier-like about bludgeoned sides, of which there were eight as well as five fours, into parts of the stadium that other batsmen could not reach.

Best, 36, was simply irresistible. He warmed up nicely in a friendly shugging match with Vivian Richards while they were adding 98 for the third wicket, but, when Richards had gone, bowled by Zaman, he got seriously nasty.

His partner, the diminutive Kallicharran, batted with typically impudent grace, but was left way behind by some brutal hitting by Best. The pair put on 161 in a mere 17 overs, and Pakistan had the look of piece-rate net bowlers.

Zaheer said between innings that they would be going for victory, but his words had a hollow ring. A flurry of early wickets, shared by Marshall and Moseley, had Pakistan totalling at 33 for four, and, from then, some gentle and almost patronising bowling was the main reason for Pakistan getting as close to the target as they did.

ENDSLEIGH INSURANCE LEAGUE

Third division: Birmingham 3 Chester 1; Scarborough 1 Barnet 1.
AUTO WINDSCREENS SHIELD: Over-35s: Southern section: Fulham 1 Bristol Rovers 2 (see score after 90 minutes 1-1); Bristol Rovers win on the golden goal rule; Hereford 1 Northampton 0; Peterborough 3 Colchester 2; Stevenage 4; Exeter 2; Northampton 3; Lincoln 1; York 1; Notts County 0.
VALDHAL CONFERENCE: Kettering 2 Northwich 2.

TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP

Second round replay: Brechin 0 Clyde 0 (Abandoned after 30 minutes).
SELE'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Partick Thistle 0 Falkirk 3; Raith Rovers 1 Celtic 3. First division: Clydebank 1 Airdrie 1; Dundee 0 Dundee United 2; St Johnstone 6 Greenock Morton 1. Postponed: Dumbarton v Dunfermline. Second division: Forth 0 East Fife 2. Postponed: Ayr v Clyde. Third division: Cowdenbeath 1 East Stirling 4. Postponed: Albion Rovers v Caerleon; Thistle Brechin v Alloa.

LEASER WOMEN'S LEAGUE: Midland division: Bridgnorth 3 Evesham 1; Rushmore 2 Bedworth 2; Middlesbrough 2; second round replay: Trowbridge 2; Walsley 1. Third round: Bedworth 0 King's Lynn 3; Chesham 3; Gosport 3; Harrogate 1 (pen); Waverham 6; Chalfont St Giles 1.
SOUTHERN CENTRAL LEAGUE: First division: Bolton 1; Nottingham Forest 1; Everton 0; Manchester United 1. Second division: Barnsley 1; Coventry 2; Grimsby 1; Burnley 0.

UNION LEAGUE: Premier division: Colwyn Bay 0; Barmby 1; Enley 0; Chorley 2. President's Cup: First round, second round: Hyde 2; Marine 2; Wilton 0; Uxbridge 0. Second round replay: Curzon Ashton 0; Ashton 3.

RUSH LEAGUE: Coca-Cola Cup: First round, first leg: Ballyclare 2; Portlough 1; Coleraine 2; Derry 0; Clontarf 0; Lifford 4; Omagh 0; Coleraine 1. Postponed: Ballyclare v Clontarf; Larne v Ardara; Navy v Glenelg. First round, second leg: Glenelg 3; Carrick 0 (agg 5-1).
BARNSLEY BREWERY LEAGUE: Premier division: Curzon Ashton 2; Curzon Ashton 2; Westwood 2; Postponed: Westwood v Rainton.

COUNTRY COUNTRIES LEAGUE: Premier division: Farnham 1; Westfield 0. Postponed: Marsham v Gosling and Gillingham; Vauxhall v Basingstoke. First division: Old Down 1; Paulson 1. Postponed: Bristol; Minto; Farm v Clontarf.

JERSEY WESTERN LEAGUE: First division: Andover 0; Winton 2. Postponed: Bourneville v Clontarf; Clontarf v Clontarf. Cup: Clontarf 1; Bourneville 2.

WALSLEY LEAGUE: First division: Blyth 0; Blyth 0; Blyth 0; Blyth 0. Postponed: Blyth v Blyth.

NORTH WEST COUNTRIES LEAGUE: First division: Newcastle Town 2; Blyth 0. Postponed: Blyth v Blyth.

UNION SUSSEX COUNTY LEAGUE: First division: Rye 0; Rye 0. Postponed: Rye v Rye.

WINTON LEAGUE: First division: Winton 2; Blyth 0. Postponed: Blyth v Blyth.

SCHOOLS MATCHES: FA Premier League under-18 Trophy: Northampton v West Yorkshire (at Leamington, 5.40). London Post Trophy: Newham v Barking (at Barking, 6.15). Barking v Barking (at Barking, 6.15). Barking v Barking (at Barking, 6.15).

OTHER SPORTS: TABLE TENNIS: Olympic qualifying tournament (Pinner Arena, Manchester). SQUASH: OMI national championships (Edgemoor Primary Club, Birmingham).

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at the new 323
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NIGEL FRENCH

Scotland will be relying on the defensive qualities of Hastings in Dublin

The Bulls intend to extend players' contracts to a full-time basis for the Super League, which begins in March. Simpson, 28, joined Bradford from Moldgreen, the amateur side, almost 11 years ago. He was selected for the Great Britain tour to New Zealand and Papua New Guinea in 1990 and played against France last year.

Bennet (Kelso), R Brown (Melrose), G Weir (Melrose), K Armstrong (Jed-Forest), R Kirkpatrick (Jed-Forest, captain). Brown replaced by I Elliot (Hawick, 28min).
Referee: J Fleming (Scotland).

f

Queen's Gambit Accepted

1	Nf3	d5
2	d4	c6
3	d4	cxd4
4	e3	b5
5	a4	e5
6	exd5	cxd5
7	b3	Bd4+
8	Bd2	Bxd2+
9	Nbx2	a5
10	bxc4	b4
11	Ne5	Nf6
12	Qxd4+	Nd7
13	e5	0-0
14	Nec4	Nf6
15	Ba2	Nd5

Times chess book

Improve your game with Raymond Keene's book, *The Times Winning Chess*, published by Batsford at £9.90 (credit card orders 01376 327901).

☐ Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

White to move. This position is from the game Gufeld - Plaskett, Hastings Premier, 1986. James Plaskett is one of Great Britain's most enterprising grandmasters, but here, he is on the receiving end of a combination from Eduard Gufeld, the well-known chess grandmaster and raconteur. White to play and win.

Solution on page 42

[illegible]

